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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

LIFE OF OUR LORD

MEDITATIONS

ON THE

LIFE OF OUR LORD

For every Day in the Year

BY

THE REV. J. NOUET, S.J.

VOL. I.

COMMENCING WITH THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT, AND TERMINATING WITH THE SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER

Translated from the French

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TO

THE MOTHER OF THE INCARNATE WORD!

THE GREAT MODEL OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE,

AS WELL AS OF THE ACTIVE LIFE,

WHO, WHILST SHE SO PERFECTLY AND SO LOVINGLY DISCHARGED

ALL THE EXTERNAL DUTIES

WHICH SHE OWED TO HER DIVINE SON,

KEPT ALL THE WORDS SHE HAD HEARD RESPECTING HIM,

PONDERING THEM IN HER HEART;

WHO NOT ONLY PRESENTED THE ETERNAL TRUTH TO THE SENSES

AND THE HOMAGE OF MAN,

BUT IS ALSO THE MOST POWERFUL AGENT FOR MAKING HIM

INTERNALLY KNOWN;

AND WHO, AS THE MOTHER OF HOLY LOVE,

IS OUR BEST INSTRUCTRESS,

AS WELL AS OUR MOST EFFICIENT ADVOCATE,

IN THE HOUR OF MEDITATION,

THIS VOLUME IS MOST HUMBLY OFFERED,

AS A TESTIMONY OF PROFOUND REVERENCE, GRATITUDE, AND LOVE,

BY HER DEVOTED, THOUGH MOST UNWORTHY CLIENT,

THE TRANSLATOR.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Page

Preface .. .. xiii.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

SUNDAY—On the necessity of preparing the heart by penance for the coming of Jesus Christ 1
MONDAY—On the Mission of the Angel Gabriel to Nazareth 3
TUESDAY—On the Salutation of the Angel 5
WEDNESDAY—On the alarm of the Blessed Virgin .. 6
THURSDAY—On the annunciation of the mystery of the Incarnation 9
FRIDAY—On the consent of the Blessed Virgin .. 11
SATURDAY—On the virtues exercised by the Blessed Virgin in the Incarnation 13

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT.

SUNDAY—On the Incarnation of the Eternal Word .. 15
MONDAY—On the perfections of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ 17
TUESDAY—On Jesus in the first moments of his human life 19
WEDNESDAY—On Jesus in the first moments of his human life 21
THURSDAY—On Jesus offering himself to his Father for the accomplishment of all his designs 23
FRIDAY—On the compassion of Jesus for our miseries .. 25
SATURDAY—On Jesus offering himself as a victim to divine justice for our sins 26

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT.

Page

SUNDAY—Jesus exerts himself for the glory of his Father and our salvation from the first moment of his life .. 28
MONDAY—The merits of Jesus commence with his life .. 30
TUESDAY—Jesus a prisoner in his incarnation .. 33
WEDNESDAY—The solitude of Jesus in his incarnation .. 35
THURSDAY—The silence of Jesus in his incarnation .. 36
FRIDAY—The prayer of Jesus in his incarnation .. 38
SATURDAY—The sufferings of Jesus in his incarnation .. 40

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT.

SUNDAY, or the Festival of the Expectation of the Blessed Virgin—The holy desires with which Jesus inspires his Blessed Mother 42
MONDAY—The poverty of Jesus in his incarnation .. 44
TUESDAY—The submission and obedience of Jesus in his incarnation 46
WEDNESDAY—The humiliations of Jesus in his incarnation 48
THURSDAY—The weakness of Jesus in his incarnation .. 50
FRIDAY—The dependence of Jesus in his incarnation .. 52
CHRISTMAS EVE—The holy desires of Jesus in his incarnation 54

CHRISTMAS WEEK.

CHRISTMAS DAY—The Blessed Virgin brings forth the Saviour of the World in the stable of Bethlehem .. 55
2ND DAY OF THE OCTAVE—On the birth of Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem 57
3RD DAY—Sentiments of a devout soul on the birth of Jesus Christ 59
4TH DAY—The angels render homage to Jesus at his birth 62
5TH DAY—An angel is sent to the Shepherds 64
6TH DAY—The adoration of the Shepherds 66
7TH DAY—The Blessed Virgin lays up all these things in her heart (for the last day of the year) 68

FIRST WEEK IN JANUARY.

THE CIRCUMCISION—On the spirit with which we should commence the year in imitation of Jesus Christ .. 70
2ND JANUARY—Jesus Christ submits to the law of circumcision, in obedience to his Eternal Father 73

Page
3RD JANUARY—On devotion to the holy name of Jesus .. 75
4TH—On how we should bear the holy name of Jesus .. 78
5TH—On bearing the holy name of Jesus, continued .. 80

FESTIVAL OF THE EPIPHANY.

On the glory of Jesus Christ in this mystery 82

FIRST WEEK AFTER EPIPHANY.

7TH JANUARY—On the vocation of the Magi 85
8TH—On the co-operation of the Magi with the divine call 87
9TH—On the journey of the Wise Men 89
10TH—On the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem .. 92
11TH—The adoration of the Kings 94
12TH—On the offerings of the Magi 97
13TH—On the return of the Magi (for the Octave Day) .. 99

SECOND WEEK AFTER EPIPHANY.

14TH—On the journey of the Blessed Virgin to Jerusalem 101
15TH—On the Purification of the Blessed Virgin .. 104
16TH—On the Blessed Virgin presenting her divine Son in the temple 106
17TH—On holy Simeon entering the temple 109
18TH—On the canticle of Simeon 111
19TH—On the flight of Jesus Christ into Egypt .. 114
20TH—On the journey of Jesus Christ into Egypt .. 117

THIRD WEEK AFTER EPIPHANY.

21ST—On the sojourn of Jesus Christ in Egypt .. 119
22ND—On the massacre of the Innocents 122
23RD—On the return of Jesus Christ from Egypt .. 125
24TH—On Jesus going to the temple at the age of twelve years 128
25TH—On Jesus Christ remaining in Jerusalem while his parents knew it not 131
26TH—How we lose the child Jesus 133
27TH—How we should seek the child Jesus 136

FOURTH WEEK AFTER EPIPHANY.

	Page
28TH JANUARY—How we may find the child Jesus ..	139
29TH—On the means of preserving Jesus in the soul ..	142
30TH—Reflections on the foregoing mystery	144
31ST—On the return of Jesus Christ to Nazareth ..	147
1ST FEBRUARY—On Jesus advancing in wisdom, age, and grace	149
2ND—On the festival of the Purification	152
3RD—On the oblation of Jesus in the temple	155

FIFTH WEEK AFTER EPIPHANY.

4TH—On the Blessed Virgin as our mediatrix of intercession in the temple	158
5TH—On the Blessed Virgin as our model in the contemplative and the active life	161
6TH—On Jesus curing the blind man of Bethsaida ..	164
7TH—On Jesus inquiring of his Disciples what men said of him	166
8TH—On Jesus predicting his death	170
9TH—On the exhortation of Jesus to mortification and sufferings	172
10TH—On the exhortation of Jesus to all men to walk in the way of the cross	175

SIXTH WEEK AFTER EPIPHANY.

11TH—On the reasons why Jesus chose the cross ..	178

SEPTUAGESIMA WEEK.

SUNDAY—Jesus is sold to the Jews	180
MONDAY—Jesus celebrates the passover with his Disciples	182
TUESDAY—Jesus washes the feet of his Disciples ..	184
WEDNESDAY—Jesus discovers the treason of Judas ..	186
THURSDAY—Jesus reproves his Disciples	188
FRIDAY—Jesus establishes the law of charity	191
SATURDAY—Jesus predicts the fall of St. Peter	193

SEXAGESIMA WEEK.

SUNDAY—Jesus consoles his Disciples	195
MONDAY—Jesus continues his discourse	198

Page
TUESDAY—Jesus addresses his heavenly Father .. 200
WEDNESDAY—Jesus goes forth from the supper-room with his Disciples, to the Mount of Olives 203
THURSDAY—Jesus is overwhelmed with profound sadness at the sight of our miseries 205
FRIDAY—Jesus conceives a profound sorrow for our offences against his Father 207
SATURDAY—Jesus suffers excessive confusion at being charged with the sins of the world 209

QUINQUAGESIMA WEEK.

SUNDAY—Jesus is seized with fear at the sight of his torments 211
MONDAY—Jesus feels an extreme repugnance for his passion and death 213
TUESDAY—Jesus has recourse to prayer in his sadness .. 215
ASH-WEDNESDAY—Jesus is strengthened by an angel from heaven 218
THURSDAY—Jesus falls into an agony.. 220
FRIDAY—Jesus in his agony sweats blood 221
SATURDAY—Jesus thrice visits his Apostles, and finds them sleeping 223

FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

SUNDAY—Jesus goes forth from prayer 225
MONDAY—Jesus by his word casts his enemies on the ground 227
TUESDAY—Jesus is bound by the Jews 229
WEDNESDAY—Jesus is led from the Garden of Olives .. 231
THURSDAY—Jesus enters Jerusalem 233
FRIDAY—Jesus is presented to Annas, who sends him to Caiphas 235
SATURDAY—Jesus outraged in the house of Caiphas .. 237

SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

SUNDAY—Conversion of St. Peter 239
MONDAY—Jesus passes the night in prison 242
TUESDAY—The Jews confirm their sentence against Jesus 244
WEDNESDAY—Jesus interrogated by Pilate 246
THURSDAY—Jesus observes a profound silence before Pilate 249
FRIDAY—Jesus is mocked by Herod 251
SATURDAY—The efforts of Pilate to deliver Jesus .. 253

THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

Page
SUNDAY—Jesus is condemned to be scourged 255
MONDAY—Jesus is bound at the pillar and cruelly scourged 257
TUESDAY—Jesus suffering at the pillar 260
WEDNESDAY—Jesus is unbound from the pillar .. 262
THURSDAY—Jesus is clothed with a robe of mockery .. 264
FRIDAY—Jesus is crowned with thorns 266
SATURDAY—Jesus bears a reed instead of a sceptre .. 268

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

SUNDAY—The soldiers bending the knee before Jesus, salute him in mockery as King of the Jews .. 270
MONDAY—Jesus came forth bearing the crown of thorns and purple garment 272
TUESDAY—Jesus is delivered to be crucified 275
WEDNESDAY—Jesus carries his cross 277
THURSDAY—Jesus aided by Simon in carrying the cross 279
FRIDAY—Jesus is led to Calvary 282
SATURDAY—Jesus arrives at Calvary 284

PASSION WEEK.

SUNDAY—The crucifixion of Jesus 287
MONDAY—The title of the cross 289
TUESDAY—Jesus prays for his enemies 292
WEDNESDAY—Jesus converts the thief 294
THURSDAY—Jesus prays on the cross 296
FRIDAY—The Blessed Virgin at the foot of the cross .. 299
SATURDAY—Jesus complains of thirst 301

HOLY WEEK.

PALM SUNDAY—Jesus enters Jerusalem in triumph .. 303
MONDAY—Jesus says, "All is consummated" 306
TUESDAY—Jesus cries with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" 308
WEDNESDAY—Jesus commends his spirit into the hands of his Father 310
MAUNDY-THURSDAY—Jesus institutes the Blessed Sacrament 312
GOOD-FRIDAY—Jesus dies 314
HOLY-SATURDAY—Jesus laid in the tomb 317

EASTER WEEK.

Page
SUNDAY—On the resurrection of Jesus Christ 319
MONDAY—On Jesus Christ in his resurrection, the model of the glorified bodies of the just 321
TUESDAY—On the spiritual resurrection of our souls .. 324
WEDNESDAY—On the time of the resurrection .. 326
THURSDAY—On the Eucharist as a pledge of the resurrection 328
FRIDAY—On the delay of the general resurrection .. 332
SATURDAY—On our Lord appearing to the Blessed Virgin 334

SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

SUNDAY—On the holy women visiting the tomb of Jesus Christ 337
MONDAY—On the apparition of the Angels to the holy women 339
TUESDAY—On the holy women entering the sepulchre .. 342
WEDNESDAY—On Saints Peter and John repairing to the sepulchre 345
THURSDAY—On Jesus Christ appearing to Magdalen .. 348
FRIDAY—On Jesus appearing to the holy women .. 351
SATURDAY—On Jesus appearing to SS. Peter and James 353

THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

SUNDAY—On Jesus performing the office of the good shepherd 357
MONDAY—On Jesus appearing to the two disciples going to Emmaus 359
TUESDAY—On Jesus acting the part of the good pastor towards the two disciples 362
WEDNESDAY—On Jesus appearing to the two disciples as a stranger and pilgrim 364
THURSDAY—On Jesus instructing the disciples in the mystery of the cross 366
FRIDAY—On the disciples entreating the Son of God to remain with them 368
SATURDAY—On Jesus discovering himself to the disciples in the breaking of bread 371

FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Page

SUNDAY—On Jesus appearing to the apostles on the day of his resurrection 373
MONDAY—On Jesus saying to his apostles, "Peace be to you" 376
TUESDAY—On the wounds of Jesus in his glorified body 378
WEDNESDAY—On Jesus giving power to his apostles to remit sin 381
THURSDAY—On the goodness of Jesus Christ to his incredulous disciple 383
FRIDAY—On the holy affections of St. Thomas on seeing his Master 385
SATURDAY—Jesus recommends faith to his apostles .. 388

FIFTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

SUNDAY—On Jesus promising the Holy Ghost to his disciples 390
MONDAY—On Jesus appearing to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias 393
TUESDAY—On Jesus discovering himself to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias 395
WEDNESDAY—On St. Peter casting himself into the sea to meet his Master 398
THURSDAY—Jesus invites his apostles to dine .. 401
FRIDAY—Jesus demands thrice of St. Peter, whether he loved him 403
SATURDAY—On Jesus reproving the curiosity of St. Peter 406

SIXTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

SUNDAY—On the necessity of prayer 408
MONDAY—On Jesus appearing to his disciples on the mountain of Galilee 410
TUESDAY—On Jesus appointing his apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations 413
WEDNESDAY—On Jesus promising to his apostles to be with them to the end of time 415

PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH the pretensions of the following translation are of too humble a character to demand a formal introduction, the manner in which it has been executed may require some explanation. It presents, for the first time, in an English dress, a selection of Meditations, extracted from the large work of the Rev. J. NOUET, S.J., written originally in French, and containing a series of considerations adapted to every day in the year. It is generally admitted by all who are conversant with spiritual life, that the best book of Meditations is that which presents, in a concise form, such a familiar digest of the Gospel truths, as may be equally adapted to the understanding and the heart, combining what is touching in sentiment with what is practical for the reformation of conduct. Although among the works of this nature which our language contains, there are some which appear to unite these qualities to a certain extent, it always appeared to the translator, that we wanted something still more efficient to promote the

practice of this important spiritual exercise—a work which may not only stimulate the mind to reflection, but give to reflection itself that practical direction which may be felt in the details of conduct. Among the continental writers who have devoted themselves to this department, the author of the following Meditations, whose character as a spiritualist stands so deservedly high, seemed to approximate most to the model which the translator had in contemplation. Yet in transfusing his Meditations into another language, and adapting them to a people of a different temperament, it was found necessary to take considerable liberty with the original. It was deemed expedient, not only to select from the great variety which the author presented, but also to modify and abridge, sometimes to curtail or omit, what appeared too exuberant in point of imagination, and not unfrequently to supply an expression or sentence calculated to give a more full development, or a more practical tendency to the moral. Although designed at first for the use of a small religious community, it appeared to the translator that the work might be found serviceable in a larger sphere of utility, and might be used with advantage either by religious or seculars.

Could the translator indulge the hope, that these volumes would serve, even in a slight degree, to promote the practice of meditation, induce those who are strangers to that most salutary spiritual exercise, to make the all-important business of salvation the subject of their serious and habitual reflection, or excite those who have already adopted it, to cultivate with

still greater assiduity and diligence a practice which tends so powerfully to secure their eternal happiness, it would not only amply repay the trouble incurred in the execution of the work, but stimulate to other and more extensive efforts for the promotion of the same object.

The Meditations on the Suffering Life of our Lord are adapted to the holy season of Lent, and devoted almost exclusively to the Passion of Christ. This adaptation perfectly harmonizes with the spirit of the Church. The mourning garb she assumes in her public ministry during that period of recollection and retreat —the deep and affecting solemnity of her ceremonial— the sorrowful tones of her liturgy—and the heart-touching appeals in which she embodies her lessons and exhortations to the faithful, feelingly express the object on which she dwells in all the fondness of impassioned grief. The passion of her divine Spouse has been, at all times, the most cherished of all her recollections, the subject dearest to her heart. She can never forget it even in her most joyful festivals; but during this season it absorbs every thought and sentiment, fills her whole heart and soul, and impels her to call upon all to sympathize with her in the depth of her grief and devotedness of her affection. Prostrate at the foot of the cross, her eyes fixed upon the bleeding form that is suspended from it, she seems to address each of her children, but particularly the wayward and the guilty, almost in the language of the Jews who witnessed the affection of our Lord for Lazarus—"See how he loved you."

Penetrated with her spirit, our author seeks to associate us with her in this tribute of condolence to the mental and bodily sufferings of our Redeemer. Impressed with the truth that it was in order to gain the heart of man that God assumed our lowly nature—that it was for the purpose of winning the confidence and affection of the most guilty and desponding he appeared in the form of helpless infancy—our author has lingered over the crib of Bethlehem, and the wonders of that mysterious childhood, with the tender emotions of a heart captivated by that spectacle of Incarnate Charity —mingling the outpourings of a holy joy with the tribute of adoration and love. But in his Meditations on the Passion of our Divine Lord, the train of thought and feeling is of a more profound and solemn, though not less salutary kind. The sighs of sorrow and the complaints of unrequited love are here mingled with his effusions of piety. Jesus Christ is here introduced to us as the Man of Sorrows, calling upon us by the voice of his blood to return "love for love." And never assuredly did he appeal so powerfully to the heart of man as in his passion. The tears which his own sufferings cannot extort, but which fall so plentifully for the calamities of others—the agony which forces the blood from his heart, but which draws no murmur from his lips—the scorn which darkens his inglorious visage, but which dims not its benignant light—and the yell of murder amid the torments of the gibbet, responded to by the prayer of forgiveness—these constitute an appeal which requires only the exercise of thought, to be felt by the most obdurate;

which has not only excited the pious to the most heroic virtue, but has fallen with a subduing influence on the mind of the unbeliever, who, like the penitent thief, commenced with the language of mockery, but ended with sentiments of profound compunction and the prayer of heroic faith.

On this subject our author is not less practical than in the former; for, though apparently impressed with the idea, that in order to act energetically in the work of salvation we must feel profoundly, he for the most part employs the affections only as a means to attain the great end of meditation—reformation of conduct. Hence his great object is to show that the appeal made by Jesus Christ is personal to every individual, and that gratitude imperatively requires of each, to appropriate to himself the sentiment of St. Paul—"He loved me and He delivered himself for me."

It would fill volumes much larger than those now presented to the public, to embody together the sentiments of the Fathers, Saints, and spiritual writers, on the advantages that are to be found in meditating on the sufferings of Christ; but they seem almost to establish a moral certainty, that the person who is thus faithful in accompanying our Lord through the stages of his passion, by the practice of daily meditation on them, may confidently expect to be associated with him in the kingdom of his glory.

It is the glorious privilege of religion to purify and consecrate every affection, as well as every faculty of the soul. It is her function and prerogative to direct not only the aspirations of our love and gratitude to

the being who created and redeemed us, but to identify with him those emotions of hope and joy, as well as of sympathy and compassion, which arise within us from the constitution of our nature. As the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ furnishes in its soul-touching incidents, all the means and facilities for establishing this identity of feeling, and thereby producing that moral union between himself and his followers, which ought to shadow forth the essential union which exists between him and his heavenly Father; the Church has been at all times solicitous to fix our attention on the traits and features of that Heavenly Man, whom we are bound to resemble under pain of eternal ruin. From contemplating the sorrows of his sufferings, she passes to the joys and consolations of his glorious and mystical life, exchanging her mourning attire for the nuptial robe, and the lamentations of the prophet for the canticles of that blessed region where the voice of mourning is never heard. She endeavours to arouse the desponding sinner by the hopes of future reward, as well as by those pledges of mercy still exhibited in the uneffaced wounds of her divine Spouse. "He is risen," is the thrilling announcement which she repeats again and again to all her children, causing the heart that mourned for his sufferings to bound with joy, like that of the penitent, whose tearful eye had vainly sought the body of her Master amid the darkness of the tomb.

From the raptures excited by his resurrection, she passes to the calm but not less absorbing contemplation of his mystical life in the sacrament of the altar; and responding to the charity of the burning heart which it

veils, worships before the tabernacle, in the stillness of profound adoration; or, by her public homages, and the splendour of her ceremonial, publishes to the world the wonders of the ineffable charity which it enshrines; or, pierced to the heart by the ingratitude and injuries with which it is repaid by man, gives vent to her feelings in the language of unmitigated sorrow. In these, as well as in the other Meditations, our author will be found to reflect with fidelity the devotional spirit of the Church. Yet, so far is the ardour of his feelings from causing him to forget his duty as a moral instructor, that it only serves to render his lessons more practical and impressive. In the glorified life of our Lord he finds continual matter to instruct and encourage us in the discharge of our active duties, whilst in his mystical life in the Blessed Sacrament, he exhibits the most powerful, as well as the sweetest, of all means for cherishing that spirit of prayer and recollection on which the fidelity of our exterior conduct principally depends. On the inestimable benefits derivable from the Holy Communion, and the dispositions requisite to receive it worthily, he is as copious as he is instructive and persuasive.

Could we presume to add anything to his excellent considerations on the subject of the adorable Eucharist, it would be to exhort all Christians to honour it by frequent visits. Assuredly there can be no exercise of prayer, no practice of devotion, so eminently calculated to glorify God and honour Jesus Christ, to preserve the vigour of an interior life, amid the most distracting cares and employments, to cherish a lively faith in the

greatest and most affecting of all the mysteries of divine love, and to keep the soul in a continual state of preparation for approaching the Holy Communion. This endearing intercourse would lead to an association with the heart of Jesus in all our active duties, a bond of union between it and our corrupt and worthless hearts, which would purify the affections and supply the deficiencies of the latter; give an infinite value to their offerings, and cause them to produce in our conduct those fruits of holiness, of which the frailest branch of the vine is capable, when united to the parent trunk, but which the strongest cannot produce when separated from it If, unfortunately, when making those visits, we cannot, with the Baptist, rejoice with joy at the presence of the bridegroom—if we dare not, like St. John, seek for consolation and repose in the heart of Jesus—if, like Mary, who worshipped at his feet, we cannot, in the ardour of our devotion, forget all creatures in his presence—if we should not even have the profound sorrow and tears of Magdalen to offer—the very obduracy of our hearts, the intensity and extent of our misery, the urgency and the number of our wants, furnish still more pressing motives to "invoke the Lord while he is near, to seek him while he can be found." If we cannot join in the canticle of praise and thanksgiving, let us cry out to him from the depth of our distress. Let us approach him, as the leper, to be cleansed; as the dropsical man, to move him to compassion by the very sight of our wretchedness; as the woman of Canaan, to beg even a crumb to allay the cravings of our spiritual hunger; let us, in the exercise of that holy importunity, humbly

remind him, on these occasions, of his own consoling announcement, "that he came not to seek the just, but those who are ready to perish;" "that it is the sick who require a physician;" and that it was the "weary and the heavy laden" he invited "to come to him for refreshment and repose." Assured that "the heavens and the earth will pass away," before a tittle of those consoling truths can perish, let us animate ourselves with the conviction, that nothing but perseverance in asking is requisite on our parts, to obtain all the succour we stand in need of. from that fountain of grace and mercy, which is always open to us in the sacred heart of Jesus

MEDITATIONS

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

On the Necessity of preparing the Heart, by Penance, for the coming of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"As many as received him to them he gave power to be made the Sons of God, to them that believe in his name, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (*John*, i.) Jesus Christ enters into the world to destroy sin; therefore if you desire to receive him, you must, according to Saint Augustin, search the foldings of your soul, that you may discover if any secret sin, which could wound the eyes of his divine Majesty, lie hid in the depth of your conscience. When the unfortunate Achen violated the prohibition given to the armies of Israel, God said in his wrath to the people: I will not dwell amongst you, till you destroy him who is guilty of this wickedness. Consider these words as addressed from heaven to yourself. Listen to our Lord, who says, "I will not enter into your heart, until you have destroyed sin therein; I cannot dwell with pride, envy, or disobedience."

O my God! how great is thy hatred of sin, yet how great thy goodness towards the sinner! Thou art satisfied when he acknowledgeth his fault with humility. Therefore, "I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord, and thou hast forgiven the impiety of my sin."

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ enters into the world to bring peace to men of good will. You must, therefore, banish all disquietude from your soul, if you desire to receive him. He is the God of peace, you must offer him a pacific victim, immolating your desires, your cares, your impetuosity, on the altar of your heart, and retire within yourself by recollection; otherwise it is to be feared that you will be like unto the Bethlemites, among whom he found only a stable, instead of a temple or a royal mansion. Remember that the altar on which the victims were immolated in the temple of Jerusalem, was hollow, and that the heart on which you should offer the sacrifice of your tears and vows, should be emptied of all inordinate affections, to receive Jesus Christ therein.

O King of Peace, come thyself to calm the trouble of my heart, that it may become thy dwelling place. Happy are they who desire nothing but thy love! They have found the only true happiness on earth: for beside thee there is nothing that can fill the heart of man.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ enters into the world to establish the law of the spirit, and engrave it in our hearts. Consequently, if you desire that he enter into yours, you must banish thence all that is carnal and sensual; for the life of the spirit and that of the flesh are incompatible. The Apostle says,—"For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; God sending his own Son, in the likeness of

sinful flesh, and of sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh." That is to say, by the flesh of Jesus Christ made a holocaust for sin, and bearing its resemblance: "that the justification of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. For they that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace. Because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be. And they who are in the flesh, cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.....For whosoever are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." *St. Paul, Rom.* viii.)

MONDAY.

On the Mission of the Angel Gabriel to Nazareth.

1st Point. Consider—the province of Galilee being the nearest to the country of the Gentiles, it was in this province that Jesus would assume our nature, to teach us that he came for the salvation of all men, without distinction of Jew or Gentile. It was there also that he assembled his disciples before ascending into heaven, to assure us that he went to take possession of it in the name of all, and that no one should be excluded unless through his own fault. O ineffable consolation! Those gates of Heaven, which appeared in the vision of the beloved disciple, corresponding to the four quarters of the globe, are now thrown open to us. Let us hasten,

O my soul, to enter by one of these doors; death shall close them for ever to the impenitent sinner. Let not tepidity prevent thee, or cause thee to hear at the hour of thy decease these dreadful words—"The door is shut." (*Matt.* xxv.)

2nd Point. Consider—the city of Nazareth was the least considerable of Galilee, whence Nathaniel understanding that Jesus was a Nazarean, said with surprise—"Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (*John*, i. 46.) Admire the humility of the Son of God, who begins so early to practise that which he is afterwards to teach, viz.—to choose always the lowest place. The Son of God has particularly honoured four places on earth—Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Rome. His humility appeared in choosing the first, his poverty in the second, his patience in the third, and the last named is the dwelling place of faith, and the immutable seat of the religion which he has established. Love these four virtues; begin with the lowliest, which is humility, if you desire that Jesus enter into your heart.

3rd Point. Consider—how great the veneration due to the dwelling of the Blessed Virgin, wherein was wrought the greatest of all miracles; a dwelling doubly holy, as being sanctified by the birth of the purest of all creatures, and by the incarnation of the Holy of Holies. Unite yourself with all the devout servants of Jesus and Mary, to visit and honour in spirit that blessed mansion, to present the vows and oblations of your heart and lips, to participate in the prayers and good works there offered, to give thanks to God for the mercies he has shed upon it, and to obtain an increase of these graces for yourself in particular, as well as for all the faithful

TUESDAY.

The Salutation of the Angel.

1st Point. Consider—what was the disposition of the Blessed Virgin when the angel saluted her. It was already midnight; and yet St. Bernard says she still watched in prayer. When the Angel Gabriel appeared to Zachary, the Scripture remarks that he was offering incense; and when he came to the Blessed Virgin, he found her in prayer. The angels, though not visible, are not less present and favourable to us in prayer. Who can conceive the lights, the graces, the holy desires, the ardours of divine love, the heroic acts of virtue the Holy Ghost produced in the heart of his spouse, to dispose her for this mystery? How powerfully must not all the faculties of Mary's soul, and all the virtues by which she was adorned, have been excited and elicited at the approach of the Divine Word! Her humility was profound even to annihilation her charity was exalted above the heavens, her heart was all fire, and her mind filled with the rays of the sun of Justice, who came to enlighten the darkness of the world.

O my soul, how powerful is prayer to attract the benedictions of heaven, when it is accompanied by humility, confidence, and love.

2nd Point. Consider—how the angel enters the chamber of the Blessed Virgin, the doors being shut; imagine the modesty, humility, and profound respect that appear in the countenance of this divine messenger, who comes to announce the descent of a God upon earth, to her whom He had chosen for Mother. Learn hence what your comportment should be, when you present yourself before God in prayer, or when you supplicate the holy Virgin. Beware of ever failing in

respect in presence of him before whom the seraphim tremble. and who punishes severely the slightest faults that even his just servants commit, contrary to the reverence due to his infinite greatness.

3rd Point. Consider—the praises with which the angel salutes the Blessed Virgin, before declaring to her the subject of his embassy—"Hail, full of grace," (*Luke*, i. 28,) by a plenitude as transcendant as it is peculiar. The Lord is with thee in love, thought, and action, but He will soon be with thee as the child of thy womb. Blessed art thou amongst women, on account of thy singular prerogatives, and particularly that of thy future maternity. O Blessed Virgin, accept the homage that I render thee, with the angel, in honour of these three privileges, which are the true sources of thy joy. I rejoice in the plenitude of grace with which thou hast been honoured, and which enables thee to be so liberal to those who serve thee.

O most holy of all creatures! I ask thee not to obtain for me earthly goods, the favour and esteem of creatures, since thou hast taught me by thy example to despise all these; I only desire and esteem three things in this life: the grace of God, the presence of God, the benediction of God. Vouchsafe to obtain these for me, and I shall esteem myself rich indeed.

WEDNESDAY.

On the Alarm of the Blessed Virgin.

1st Point. Consider—"Having heard him, she was troubled at his discourse." (*Luke*, i. 29) The angel having saluted the Virgin in this strain of praise, paused in expectation of her reply; but she was silent, and was troubled at his words, and thought within her-

self what kind of salutation this might be. This trouble, says Saint Bernard, was not inordinate; she was troubled, but did not lose her presence of mind. This emotion did not prevent her from thinking what she ought to do, or examining the words of the angel; her surprise was not caused by the novelty of the apparition, for her ordinary and familiar conversation was with heaven and the angels. Saint Ambrose attributes this fear to her angelic purity, for hitherto her vision of angels had been intellectual, but in honour of and conformity to the mystery of the incarnation, the Angel Gabriel had assumed a human form, and at this new form her virginal modesty is alarmed. O how precious, but how delicate is the flower of purity! a look, a word, suffices to tarnish it: therefore chaste souls should continually distrust themselves, and fly the least occasions of danger.

2nd Point. Consider—another cause of trouble, which marks still more the sanctity of the Blessed Virgin. Her profound humility could not suffer the praises or extraordinary respect rendered to her by the angel. There is no more solid mark of virtue, than to fly praise with the same care that worldlings seek it. "A man is known by the praises that are given to him," says the wise man, "as gold is proved in the furnace." (*Prov.* xxvii.) A weak mind is easily caught by this poison: the saints, on the contrary, rejected it with horror; they feared it would be the recompense of the good which they effected through the grace of God. They considered honour as a forbidden fruit, which they could not gather without injustice, or taste with out danger of death, seeing that the glory of their good works belongs to Jesus Christ. In fine, they knew that the judgment of the world is as fruitless as it is false, whereas our happiness absolutely depends on that of God, who often attaches his malediction to the benediction of men. Imitate the Blessed Virgin by care-

fully suppressing all vain complacency at your own praise: it will pass away and leave you nothing but bitterness. Do not seek to prolong by useless replies, or affected modesty, the discourse in which you are commended; you should have recourse to silence for your defence. Do not lightly believe what is said in your favour, but listen to the voice of God, who says by the prophet Isaiah,—"O my people, they who praise deceive thee, and turn thee from the true path of virtue and salvation: it is God who is to judge thee, and not man."

3rd Point. Consider—the angel, in order to calm the fear of the Blessed Virgin, calls her by her name. For the soul must be calm, in order to receive the divine impressions. Learn hence how necessary are peace of heart and tranquillity of mind, when you pray. For if even a just trouble is an obstacle to receiving the light of the Holy Ghost, how can it enter amid the tumult of irregular passions. Be not surprised if God and his angels rarely visit you: and if their visits have little effect, it is because your heart is like a sea agitated by the winds. Your irregular desires, your fears, your disquietudes, render you incapable of the divine communications. If you desire that God should visit you in prayer, approach him with a heart undisturbed by passion. Have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, that she may obtain for you the peace so necessary for conversing with God, since through her is imparted the plenitude of grace that re-establishes peace between God and man.

THURSDAY.

The Annunciation of the Mystery of the Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—the happy news which the angel bears to the Blessed Virgin: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High." (*Luke*, i. 31.) Thou hast already conceived him spiritually in thy heart by faith and love, thou shalt conceive him corporally by obedience, and the power of the Holy Ghost. Admire the happiness of the Blessed Virgin, in whom virginity and the divine maternity are united. Honor in her person these two singular prerogatives; salute her with profound respect, and remember that you can participate in her happiness; first by conceiving Jesus Christ spiritually by faith and charity; secondly, by receiving him corporally in the holy communion. This conception and reception will operate in you a great purity, united with an abundant fruitfulness in all virtues, and will render you capable of bringing forth Jesus Christ, not only in yourself, but also in the hearts of many others. Remember, it is not enough to conceive Jesus Christ; you must bring him forth; that is to say, it suffices not to form good desires, they must be reduced to practice by the exercise of good works.

2nd Point. Consider—the angel reveals to the Blessed Virgin the name her son is to bear: first, because it belonged to God alone to impose a name on his only Son; secondly, to give her to understand, by virtue of the name of Jesus, God would give her not only a Son but a Saviour. He gave him not for herself alone, but for the whole world. This demonstrates, that when God imparts to us any grace, he intends not

merely our particular profit, but also that we should employ it for the salvation of our neighbour. Thirdly, to win her consent by the charm of this sweet name of Jesus, which, undoubtedly, excited in her heart the tenderest emotion, since it operates so powerfully even on the most obdurate. O who can tell the esteem that she felt for this sacred name, and her joy at the promised reparation of the world!

Holy Virgin, thou wert the first to hear this adorable name, and to engrave it in thy heart; obtain for us, from thy divine Son, that he may pass from thy heart into ours, to enlighten, console, fortify, and inflame them with his love.

3rd Point. Consider—the eulogium of the angel on the incarnate Word He shall be great—he has always been, as God, equal to his Father; but he shall now be, as man, infinitely exalted above all created beings; "He shall be acknowledged Son of the Most High;" He shall possess the empire of the universe, figured by the throne of David; "And of his kingdom there shall be no end." (*Luke*, i. 31.) O glorious kingdom, in which all will be kings for eternity, where all will glorify for ever the King of Kings, whose glory, reflected on his saints, will make them as brilliant suns in the kingdom of his Father! O that Jesus would deign to number us "among his people," to deliver us from our sins!

Remember us, O Lord, according to the love thou bearest to thy people; visit us by thy salutary grace, that we may have part in thy triumph, and that thou mayest be praised by those who are thy inheritance. Take away, O Lord, all scandals out of thy kingdom, which is my soul, that thou mayest reign therein, for thou art my King and my God, who willest the salvation of Jacob

FRIDAY.

On the Consent of the Blessed Virgin.

1st Point. Consider—the words of the Blessed Virgin: "Behold the hand-maid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word." (*Luke*, i.) How noble the faith of the Blessed Virgin! Can anything be more elevated above our understandings, than the most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Word, and the maternity of a virgin? These are, nevertheless, the object of her faith. Moreover, *she* requires no miracle to induce her to believe in all these things. God promises Palestine to his servant Abraham: the father of the faithful demands a sign. Gideon receives a command on the part of God: at the same time he asks a sign The angel promises Zachary that he shall have a son in his old age: he also demands 'whence he shall know this." But the Blessed Virgin, whose fidelity far transcended that of all creatures, asks no proof of the promise of God In opening her understanding to the simple light of faith, she attracts to it the Sun of Justice himself, who enlightens her with his glory. O how much are we indebted to her! Well may we consider her as the model of faith! O sweet words—"Behold the hand-maid of the Lord!" O chaste turtle, whose voice announces the spring time of grace! may it, at the hour of our death, announce to us the summer of glory.

2nd Point. Consider—the incarnate Word is the fruit of all the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, as will appear to you when you meditate these words: "Behold the hand-maid of the Lord." It is humility itself that speaks, and annihilates before God all that is in the creature. It is purity that opens its heart, to receive within it the lily of the valley. It is the voice

of divine love, which the Holy Ghost breathes over this virginal earth, to produce the fruit of life. It is obedience speaks by the mouth of the Blessed Virgin, who offers herself for all the designs that God has over her, and associates herself to the labours, the pains, and the cross of her Son. In fine, be persuaded that whatever is most sublime in all the virtues, is here combined to enrich the sacrifice that she offers of her will to all the decrees of Divine Providence; so that she may say to the Eternal Father, "My heart hath uttered a good word: to the glory of the King I consecrate all my works." (*Psalm* xliv.) Thus you ought to act, following her example; and as God sheds upon you the riches of his bounty, you should also draw forth from your heart whatever is most estimable to make an oblation of it to his Son. And if there is nothing good to be found therein, at least draw forth all that is evil, and endeavour to destroy it, in order to become more agreeable to him

3rd Point. Consider—what is written of the valiant woman: "She considered a field, and she purchased it." (*Prov.* xxxi.) What is this field, this fertile inheritance the Blessed Virgin purchases this day? It is the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, united to the Divine Word. What does she find in this field, after having made it the subject of her consideration? She finds much pain and suffering for the space of thirty-three years, and under those a great treasure hidden. What is the amount of the purchase? The purest blood of her heart, to form the precious flesh with which the Divine Word shall clothe himself, in order to make war on the demon, and to destroy his empire. Ah! what should we not give to purchase Jesus Christ? What is there in this world to be compared with him? And, nevertheless, we refuse to yield up a point of honour, a trifling interest, a vain pleasure, a nothing for the possession of him. Whence comes this blindness?

It is that we have not sufficiently considered the value of this evangelical field, and that we are ignorant of its worth.

O my Saviour, if men knew the treasures thou hidest in thy bosom, they would spare nothing to purchase thee.

SATURDAY.

On the Virtues exercised by the Blessed Virgin in the Incarnation.

1st POINT. Consider—"Behold the hand-maid of the Lord." (*Luke*, i.) Fidelity is a leading quality in a perfect servant. The fidelity of the Blessed Virgin is accompanied by an admirable wisdom. She first examines the message the angel bears; but as soon as the order of God is declared to her, she faithfully corresponds with his will, reserving nothing to herself, giving all to God. She consecrates to obedience all the powers of her soul and body. Behold the faithful servant of the Lord; faithful in peril and in suffering, even to the cross; faithful in rendering to God all the glory of his own gifts, and attributing nothing to herself; faithful to execute in all things the divine will and counsels.

Dispose of me, O Lord, according to thy good pleasure; place me where thou wilt; it is thy glory to command, and mine to be faithful in executing. Is this the disposition of your soul? Are you faithful in all things? Faithful in employing the talents that God has bestowed, faithful in the trials that he sends, faithful in the accomplishment of his laws and counsels? If so, you shall one day hear from his lips those words of consolation,—"Good and faithful servant, because

thou hast been faithful in few things, I will place thee over many. Enter into the joy of the Lord." (*Mark* xxv.)

2nd Point. Consider—the love of labour manifested by the Blessed Virgin. This virtue appears in the services rendered to the incarnate Word, in the journeys she undertook, and the exile she endured. She was never idle, but employed carefully every moment of time, to the glory of God, and in labouring for the support of her divine Son. In this spirit she offers herself to God with promptitude, to be employed in the service of the infant she is to conceive, joyfully devoting all her powers to be consumed therein. Saint Ephrem remarks, that in recompense she bore him without suffering, and brought him forth without pain. Learn hence that all the saints were lovers of labour. Do you desire to know whether Jesus Christ is the fruit of your obedience, as he was of that of the Blessed Virgin? Do you bear him without pain, and bring him forth without sorrow? In a word, do you labour generously? We are all equally born to labour on earth and to reign in heaven. By the works of your hands you shall discover whether you be worthy of the crown.

3rd Point. Consider—in the amount of the incarnation the promise of God is accomplished, and the immaculate Virgin crushes the head of the serpent. For as the incarnation of the Son of God depends on the word of the Virgin, she has no sooner uttered it than the Well-beloved of his Father descends from heaven, destroys the empire of darkness, crushes the head of the infernal serpent, and causes death itself to die.

O Virgin, stronger and more worthy of benediction than Judith, how great is thy glory, to have cut the head of Holofernes by thy word, more piercing than the sword! How powerful is an act of obedience! It puts all the demons to flight, and triumphs over every vice

SECOND SUNDAY.

On the Incarnation of the Eternal Word.

1st Point. Consider—"the word is made flesh." (*John*, i.) As soon as the Blessed Virgin has given her consent, the Holy Ghost descends upon her, and by an incomprehensible miracle forms of her pure blood a most perfect body; he also creates a soul of incomparable beauty, and at the same instant the Word unites himself to this soul and body. He becomes the Man-God, the Blessed Virgin concurring to this great work in quality of mother. Although there is but one man who is God, nevertheless we all participate in this honour, and each of us may be united to the Word in quality of brother, friend, or spouse, provided we dispose ourselves for this union. Thus, the incarnation is the elevation of human nature to the divine, which is a dignity the most inconceivable. It was said to man in contempt—"Thou art dust;" and now it is said to him in honour—"Thou art God;" thou art the Son of the Most High, and heir presumptive of his crown. Is your life conformable to this glorious prerogative? Are your actions worthy of that divine filiation? Do not your desires, thoughts, words, and conduct, derogate from the title of the child of God? Ah! if you follow your passions, if you live according to the flesh and the world, you may justly be reproached with being but dust and ashes.

2nd Point. Consider—how the Blessed Virgin concurs to the completion of this mystery, and the honour it reflects on her. This quality of Mother of God, which is the source of her dignity, should also be the motive of the homage and service you render her; and as it gives her an admirable power over the person, the heart, and all the graces of her Son, it

should also give her the same power over you and all that regards you. Examine if you honour her as Jesus Christ did whilst living here on earth; whether you obey her as he did, and allow her to dispose of your will, your inclinations, your honour, and your life. If you entertain not these sentiments for her, fear lest she should not bear towards you the sentiments and tenderness of a mother.

3rd Point. Consider—that he who is without a beginning in the bosom of the eternal Father, begins now a new life in the womb of his blessed mother. When shall he begin to live in you by a holy and perfect life? When will you be able to glory with Saint Paul, that you live no longer for yourself, but that Jesus Christ lives, and continues in you the life that he led on earth, viz.—a life of innocence, purity, and simplicity, in fine, a life of all the virtues? It is in your power to make him live so within you; and he desires nothing more. Be not so much your own enemy, as to neglect so excellent a life. Be not content with inducing him to live in you; cause him to increase by prayer, spiritual lectures, the practice of mortification, and the exercise of good works, until you arrive at the plenitude of the age of Jesus Christ. Happy and blessed is he who, having Jesus living within him, can say in each thought and action, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me, and delivered himself for me.

O Blessed Virgin, obtain for us this grace; you, who have as truly conceived your divine Son in your heart as in your chaste womb, and who can say with the Eternal Father, "I have within me the source of life." Bring forth in us this dear Son, form within our hearts this source of life, undeterred by our unworthiness. The world was not worthy to receive him when you gave him birth. Consider the desire he has of assuming this new life in us, and that you cannot bear more gloriously the name of mother, than by

producing him by a continual generation, so that you can say at each moment that you bring him forth in our hearts: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

MONDAY.

the Perfections of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—the soul of Jesus as a sun, whose elevation, strength, and light, transcend the faculties of angels and of men. This divine light discovers all things, penetrates the secrets of all hearts. Nevertheless its splendour remains hidden during his mortal life; and while he converses with men, he manifests not his wisdom, his science, or the lights of his understanding. All is concealed under the veil of humility; or if some rays break forth, it is only to enlighten and instruct the poor, the simple, and the lowly: "I give thee thanks, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father; for so it hath pleased thee." (*Matt.* xi. 25.) Learn hence to prefer virtue to all human knowledge or natural gifts. Never value yourself for any supposed talent; if it be sometimes necessary to discover any acquirement you may possess, for the edification or utility of your neighbour, let it be with great modesty. Never dispute, or desire to triumph over the opinions of others. Employ willingly the talents God has bestowed on you in the instruction of the poor. Your merit will be greater, and the danger of vanity less. Happy is he who can say with Jesus Christ: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He hath

sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captive, and sight to the blind." (*Luke*, iv. 18.)

2nd Point. Consider—the sacred body of Jesus being the organ of his soul, necessarily participates in its sanctity and beatitude; but as the latter quality would render him incapable of suffering, and consequently of meriting the redemption of the world, he suspends, for that great object, the prerogative of beatitude, but not of sanctity, of which he was full even to overflowing. Hence, though susceptible of suffering, his blessed soul is exempt from all resistance to the movements of the spirit. Admirable privilege, which should on one side fill us with joy and respect, if we love Jesus Christ; and on the other, cause us to deplore with Saint Paul the weakness, repugnance, and contradiction, which we experience on the part of the body, in the practice of virtue. Unhappy man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death—from the pressure of this burden? My soul, mortification will restore thee to the happy state of original innocence, if thou prove thyself fervent and persevering in its exercise.

3rd Point. Consider—the sacred body of Jesus is the organ, not only of his soul, but also of his divinity, to which it is personally united. In this respect it possesses a divine virtue capable of operating miraculously on souls and bodies. His touch heals the leprous, his word chases away devils, his spittle restores sight to the blind, the hem of his garment gives health to the infirm, and his very look touches the hardened heart, and converts the sinner. Why has he not the same power over you? What change ought there to have been wrought in you since you first had the happiness of receiving the holy communion? Whence comes it that you are still the same, that is to say, weak in your resolutions, violent in your passions, unquiet and im

petuous in your desires, inconsiderate in your words, rash in your undertakings, blind in your counsels and entire conduct?—Is it a want of faith? Is it a want of courage? Is it that you are too much pre-occupied by self-love?

TUESDAY.

Jesus in the first moments of his human life.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus beholding clearly the infinite goodness and sovereign beauty of God, is at the same time inflamed with the beatific love. This love attracts directly to God all the powers of his soul with an incomparable ardour and complacency; so that we may say in this blessed moment, God began to be loved to the greatest possible extent. Rejoice that there is in the world one heart that loves God perfectly, and repairs the offences committed against him. Rejoice also, that this is a human heart like unto your own; honour the blessed Virgin, of whose pure blood it was formed; but be confounded that your love is so unlike to his.

My sweet Saviour! my consolation is, that you have given me your own heart to supply the weakness of mine. O God, sovereignly amiable, my heart being incapable of loving, allow me to offer thee that of thy beloved Son, and to implore one spark of the fire that consumes it, to purify and inflame mine.

2nd Point. Consider—the love of Jesus tending towards God with all its force, extends at the same time to his works He considers creatures as the property, the dependents, the subjects of God, and in this view he cannot but love them. True charity loves all that belongs to God, and which is loved by Him, purely

because he loves it. Is it thus you love your neighbour, your friends, your relatives? Is it thus you love yourself? Do you love nothing but for God? Do you love God in all things? Do you love all things in God? Your charity should have no bounds; it should embrace all—friends, enemies, relatives, strangers, the poor, the rich, adversity, prosperity, in a word, whatever comes from God, or belongs to him.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus loving God sovereignly and beholding his sacred humanity united to the Divinity, consequently loves all men as his brethren, ardently desiring for them every good, and, above all, their eternal salvation. His love is infinitely communicative: he associates us to all the good he possesses, and he participates in all our miseries. Imitate this admirable bounty; let charity pour back upon your neighbour the benefits you receive from God, and excite your sympathy for his suffering members. Be persuaded that charity gives a legitimate right over all that you possess, to those who are poor, and even over your life, to those who are in danger of their eternal salvation. Listen to these words of the Apostle—"The charity of Jesus Christ presseth us." (2 *Cor.* v. 14.) You can render nothing to the Son of God, because you have nothing but what you have received from him, and moreover he has no need of you, but he holds himself indebted for the good you procure your brethren. Be then charitable to them if you would not be ungrateful towards him. Spare nothing to save them; whatever good you do them for his sake, you can do nothing comparable to what he has done for you.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus in the first moments of his human life.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus beholding the sovereign excellence and infinite majesty of God, adores him with profound submission, as the creator and glorifier of his sacred humanity. This reverence with which the soul of Jesus is impressed towards his eternal Father, arises from the clear knowledge he possesses of his own nothingness as man. As his light surpasses that of all the saints, he better understands the distance between the Creator and the creature; and consequently descending more deeply into the nothingness of the latter, he exalts the divinity to which it is united. Learn hence that the knowledge of self contributes much to the glory of God. Therefore it is of much import to sound well your own nothingness and baseness. Dive deeply into this abyss; this knowledge is a rich treasure. When you arrive at its centre, you will there find God.

O sovereign majesty of God, grant that I may know thee and know myself. Thou art the abyss of being and of all good, as I am an abyss of nothingness and sin. Shall not pride and self-love be annihilated in this two-fold depth of all and of nothing?

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus knowing that the infinite greatness of God is worthy of all praise and benediction, employs both the lights of his understanding and the ardour of his heart to praise and bless him. He praises him by his works, as well as by the affections of his heart. The admirable life he now commences is a praise as touching as it is effective. O how pleasing to the sanctity of God is a holy life! This is a solid good, whilst affections and sentiments are transitory. Every moment of such a life renders to God a rich

tribute of honour; every action of it glorifies some of the divine attributes. Virginity honours the purity of his being; voluntary poverty, his independence and the inexhaustible treasure of his riches; obedience, his sovereign dominion; hope, his infinite power; love, his supreme goodness, which claims in a particular manner the homage of the heart. Reflect on yourself, and consider whether your life is not rather a contempt than a true praise of God. What glory do you render him by your actions? Is not your tepidity and irregularity a cause of scandal? whereas there is not a moment of your life, a sigh of your heart, a movement of your body, which should not praise God, and lead others to praise him. "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall ever be in my mouth."

3rd Point. Consider—the fervent thanksgiving the soul of Jesus offers to his eternal Father, beholding himself elevated to a union with the Divine Being, and enriched with so many graces: like a pure and bright mirror, he returns to its source all the light he receives from it. Who can conceive with what tenderness he says to his heavenly Father: "I give thee thanks, O Father. All that I have received belongeth to thee, and all that thou art belongest to me." (*John*, xi. 11.) Let this example fill you with confusion for your ingratitude to God: had you any feeling of his goodness, could you be so cold in his services? Could you abuse his gifts, and be so blind as to use against himself the benefits conferred on you? Why are you so destitute of the goods of heaven? Because your ingratitude dries up their source; you forget God, and he forgets you; you have no respect for him, and he has no tenderness for you: in a word, you are poor and miserable, because you are unmindful of the divine favours.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that he hath done for thee who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy

life from destruction; who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion; who satisfieth thy desire with good things." (*Psalm* cii.)

THURSDAY.

On Jesus offering himself to his Father for the accomplishment of all his designs.

1st Point. Consider—the soul of Jesus being replenished with the graces of the Holy Ghost, he suffers them not to remain inactive a single moment, but makes an offering to his eternal Father, the most precious and pleasing that had ever been presented. To understand this, consider, in the first place, he offers *himself*, which is the greatest and richest of all gifts Many offer to God their prayers, alms, fasts, and mortifications; but few offer *themselves*, and make an oblation of their *hearts*. They always secretly reserve to themselves the disposal of their own will. This division is displeasing to God; it is not the sacrifice of Abel, it is the sacrifice of Cain, who offered to God the fruits of the earth, but reserved to himself his heart and will, as Saint Augustine says. Act not thus towards your master; give your whole self to him; say, with the prophet Isaiah: "O Lord my God, possess me, for I am thy creature; I acknowledge no other master but thee;" or with David: "O Lord, I give myself to thee, for I am thy slave, and the son of thy hand-maid." (*Psalm* cxv. 16.)

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus makes an entire offering of himself, placing no limits to his obedience, but the good pleasure of his Father. Already he pronounces in secret that which he will one day express in the excess of his agony: "My Father, dispose of me according to thy will, and not according to mine."

(*Matt.* xxvi. 39,) of which I make thee a sacrifice, having no desire but to please thee. Offer yourself, in like manner, for all the designs that God has over you. Say to him, with the prophet: "Send me where thou wilt," (*Isaias*, vi. 8,) I am ready for all things; or with Saint Paul: "What wilt thou that I do?" (*Acts*, ix. 6); or rather with Jesus Christ himself, at his entrance into the world: "Behold me; I come to do thy will, O my God" (*Heb* x. 9.)

3rd Point. Consider—that Jesus offers himself generously, and with the most pure, holy, and perfect devotedness, having no other view in this oblation than to be entirely consumed for the Glory of God and our salvation. Animate all you do for God with a like devotion. Let the fervour of your affection compensate for the meanness of your offering. Unite your heart to that of Jesus, your life to his, your insignificance to his grandeur: thus shall your sacrifice become of inestimable price.

O Lord my God, be thou eternally blessed; to thee belongs power and glory, to thee all praise is due. All that is in heaven or on earth is thine. Thou art the Lord of all things. Thou swayest the sceptre of the universe. Therefore I render thee profound homage, and devote myself to the glory of thy name. But who am I, my God, that I dare present this offering? All is thine; I can give nothing but what I have received from thee. I know, my God, simplicity of heart is acceptable to thee; therefore in that spirit I joyfully present my offering; I have no greater satisfaction than to behold souls give themselves to thee without reserve. Preserve, O Lord, this affection of my heart, and grant that my profound veneration for thee may be ever unshaken." (*Paral.* xxix. 10.)

FRIDAY.

On the Compassion of Jesus for our Miseries.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus, in the moment of his incarnation, extending his view over the past, the present, and the future, discovers the pitiable condition of mankind. Seeing on one side heaven closed, and on the other hell open to sinners who, by a frightful blindness, precipitate themselves therein, he is touched with extreme compassion for their misery; so that from that moment it may be said of him: "Jesus beholding the multitude, had compassion on them, because they were weak, and dispersed like sheep without a pastor." (*Matt.* ix. 26.) Rank yourself with those unhappy sinners, whose misfortune pierces the tender heart of your Saviour; say to him with sentiments of gratitude and love: O sweet Jesus, what is man, to deserve thy care, and why placest thou thy affections on him? It is the excess of thy ardent charity. If thou wert not infinitely merciful, wouldst thou deign to look upon a creature so mean and criminal as I am?

2nd Point. Consider—amongst all the miseries of man, that which afflicts Jesus most is sin. He considers it as an evil in some sort infinite, whether viewed as an offence to an infinite majesty, or as depriving man of an infinite good; and this consideration enkindles in his heart a zeal for the honour of God that devours him, an inconceivable sorrow, and pressing desire for the destruction of sin, as well as an incomparable ardour to make his Father known to men, in order to draw them to his love. Are you thus sensible to the offences committed against God, and the loss of souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ? When you witness or hear of scandals or disorders in the world, does the sword of sorrow penetrate your inmost soul?

Are you consumed with zeal for the honour of God? Do you deplore the fall of your brother, for whom Jesus Christ died? Would to God that you were as jealous of the salvation of souls, as you are of your own interest!

3rd Point. Consider—amongst all the sins of the world, he is sensible to yours in particular: he sees all the tepidity, weakness, and misery of your soul; he knows your ingratitude and infidelity to grace; he beholds the anger of God ready to burst forth and chastise you with rigour. His bowels of mercy yearn; he ardently desires your conversion: should not your heart respond to his love? Should you not think seriously on your salvation, for which he is consumed with zeal? Yet you defer your amendment from day to day; you love your danger. Admonition offends, and you cannot endure reprehension. Do you not fear lest the justice of God should avenge your contempt of his goodness?

"O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chastise me in thy wrath. Have pity on me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, for my bones are shaken, and my strength is withered. My soul is troubled; but thou, O Lord, how long wilt thou delay to succour me? Turn, O Lord, and deliver my soul; save me for thy mercy's sake." (*Psalm* vi.)

SATURDAY.

On Jesus offering himself as a Victim of Divine Justice for our Sins.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus knowing it to be the will of his Father that he should become the Redeemer of the world, repair the glory, and satisfy the justice of

the God-head, willingly accepts the charge, taking upon him, from that moment, the heavy burden of our sins. He might have chosen a life of glory and happiness, suitable to his Majesty, whereas one single sigh of his heart would suffice to atone for the crimes of the whole world; but he voluntarily renounces this, and in order to satisfy the divine justice, deprives himself of all the pleasures, honours, and riches of life. O generous sacrifice! O immense obligation! What return have you made? What have you relinquished from a desire of pleasing him? Will you not henceforth more gratefully correspond to that mercy which embraced all these privations for your sake? Remember the most agreeable service you can render him, and that which will most promote your own perfection, is to renounce your judgment, will, and desires, with all your sensual inclinations, to follow the inspirations of his spirit, and even every day retrench some innocent gratification, purely to testify your ardent desire of doing something to please him. Jesus deprives himself of all things to atone for your sins. Will you make a difficulty of denying yourself some trifling satisfaction for his sake? Your sins deserve that you should be deprived of every consolation and every good; why then will you not renounce at least a vain joy, or a vanity that solicits you to evil, and withdraws you from your duty?

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus is not satisfied with renouncing all things for the love of you, he also willingly embraces labour, suffering, confusion, and even a most cruel and ignominious death. His whole life is a perpetual cross, of which all the moments are so many sacrifices in which he immolates himself, consumed with pain and sorrow for you. Although the lives of all men and angels were yours, and that you devoted all to your Redeemer, you could never discharge the debt you owe him. Can you then refuse him a life so short and worthless as yours? O if you

could enter into the abyss of your ingratitude! there is not a moment of your life that would not be consecrated to penitence, employed in labour, or destined to mortification or the cross; yet show me one in which you suffered anything for God O days ill employed! O years lost for eternity! When will you begin to do penance, and to bear the cross with Jesus?

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus embraces the cross, but he does not choose it; he receives it from the hand of his Father, and accepts it with submission, that he may live and die by obedience. He submits to all his orders, adores his decrees; and, as if he had no will, he allows himself to be conducted by that of his Father, renewing each moment of his life the desire of pleasing him. O with what advantage you would bear your cross, did you know how to take it from the hand of Jesus Christ, and conform yourself in all things to his sacred will! Your misfortune is, that you will neither do nor suffer but according to your own inclination, and thus to suffer and labour much, with little consolation or profit.

O Saviour of my soul, teach me to renounce myself, and to regard only thy good pleasure in all the events of life. Evil is no longer evil, when it comes from thy hand: and even good ceases to be so, if dispensed by any other hand than thine.

THIRD SUNDAY.

Jesus exerts himself for the glory of his Father and our salvation, from the first moment of his life.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus the man-God commences his operations for our salvation, and the glory of his Father, from the first moment of his incarnation.

Can you say the same of your life? Alas! hitherto you have been idle; you have done nothing for God or for your salvation. Ah! say at least this day, I shall now begin. But say it efficaciously; and if you desire Jesus to dwell in your heart, remember He cannot remain inactive, He must be living therein; and to live He must operate. An idle life is death, and charity that worketh not is nearly extinct.

O Jesus, thou art the arm of God, that madest all things, and without which nothing has been made. Enter into and animate my heart; be thou my strength, my life, and the principle of all my actions. May my soul live only by thy spirit, my understanding form no thought but what proceeds from thee, and my will receive no affection but that which thou inspirest. Govern it as absolutely as thou dost thy sacred humanity, to the end it may not be one single moment without serving and loving thee.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus begins to exert his faculties, not only with promptitude, but also with fervour, continually employing all his power to give each action its utmost perfection. But you, on the contrary, add supineness to delay. Your actions are full of imperfections, because performed with tardiness and indifference. Have you ever performed one worthy of the master whom you serve? O how tepid you are! how weak the efforts you make to follow Jesus—how ill you correspond with his graces! Do you not fear he will reject you with disdain, and that he will say to you in his wrath—I would thou wert cold or hot; but thy lukewarmness makes me cast thee out of my mouth, I can no longer endure it!

3rd Point. Consider—such as is the commencement of the life of Jesus, such shall be its progress and its end. Time shall not change his devotedness; and all the waters of the sea—that is to say, all the persecutions, ingratitude, and contradictions of sinners—shall

never be able to extinguish the fire of his love. Admire the constancy with which Jesus Christ labours for your salvation; compare it with your fickleness and tepidity in his service. Your disposition changes almost every moment. You give yourself to devotion when you feel in it a sensible relish: you quit it when that fails. The least difficulty dejects, and you are only re-animated by heavenly consolations. These frequent changes destroy your perfection, and cause Jesus Christ to suffer in your soul an extreme violence.

O Sun of Justice that dissipatest the darkness of the world, and rekindlest the fire of charity, by renewing the love of all the virtues, hide not from me the rays of thy grace, and thy divine inspirations; be not wearied with soliciting me to virtue and withdrawing me from sin; operate continually on my heart, and excite it to correspond with, and follow thy divine light, that it may labour for thee, as thou hast incessantly laboured for my salvation.

MONDAY.

The merits of Jesus commence with his life.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus being in a state to merit from the commencement of his life, he at the same moment begins to acquire for us an inexhaustible treasure of grace and spiritual riches. His understanding is enlightened by the eternal wisdom: his will, though impeccable, is perfectly free for affecting all good. He is holy in his human nature, not only by sanctifying grace, which is the principle of merit, but also in a manner infinitely more noble, by increated sanctity, which is the source of all grace; and his glorious soul, being capable of suffering in a mortal body,

is consequently capable of meriting. In fine, he has the promise of his Father, who from that instant manifests to him his will, saying—"Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee; ask of me and I will give unto thee all the nations for thy inheritance." (*Psalm* ii. 7, 8) And Jesus entering into the world, reciprocally replied—"Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but thou hast formed for me a body: holocausts for sin were not pleasing to thee. Then, said I, behold I come according as it is written of me, to do thy will, my God" (*Psalm* xxxix 7, 8.) And it is by this will, in virtue of this mutual compact, that "we have been sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ which was offered once." (*Heb.* x. 10.) Admire this child, who, as Isaiah says, "overthrows the power of Damascus, and carries away the spoils of Samaria, even before he can name his Father and Mother;" that is to say, who already triumphs over the powers of darkness, closes the gates of hell, and opens for us those of heaven. Be sorry for the treasures you lose by your tepidity, and which you could so easily amass by the good employment of time. You have not the happiness of angels, who have merited heaven from the first moment of their being, or that of saints, who began to merit it from the first use of reason. Have at least the contrition of penitents, who by their tears and holy fervour, have repaid the loss sustained by the disorder of their life and the forgetfulness of their salvation.

2nd Point. Consider—the merits of Jesus Christ are infinite; first, on account of the infinite dignity of his person; secondly, on account of the infinite sanctity with which his soul is invested. O what joy replenished the heart of Jesus, in beholding the extent of these merits, sufficient to redeem all sinners, and acquire as much grace and glory as God himself can bestow! What consolation and happiness to possess in him such a treasure! What confidence and courage should you

have, remembering that the merits of Jesus Christ are your inheritance, and that the immensity of his treasures, the value of all his actions, constitute your patrimony!

O Lord, how happy it is to be attached to thy service, and to be inseparably united to thee! What may I not hope from thy mercy, if I know how to avail myself of it. Blessed are they who participate in thy graces! Grant that I may never be deprived of them; I ask, O Lord, but one drop of thy blood, one tear from thine eyes, one sigh of thy heart: I shall be but too rich, if thou deignest to apply to me their merit.

3rd Point. Consider—every action of the life of Jesus was infinitely meritorious, as each was infinitely holy. He merited in repose, he merited in all his exterior and interior acts, and even by his beatific love, because, although in the latter he was not free with regard to God, who is its principal object, he was perfectly so with regard to the means which he chose for honouring him, and for doing good to man: but, above all, he consummated his merits in dying by obedience on the wood of the cross. His death was the completion of his merits, and the seal of the promise of his Father, who had attached to this august sacrifice the entire recompense of his labours, according to Isaiah —"If he shall give his life for sin, he shall see a long generation; and the will of the Lord shall be prosperous in his hand." (*Isaiah*, liii. 10.) Learn hence that all your actions should be full, so that not one should be devoid of merit; but all the recompense you can hope for, depends upon suffering and death. Fly not then the cross, or death; but live so as to be found at that moment exempt from sin and rich in merit.

O my Saviour, I am resolved henceforth to labour with more ardour to amass treasures in heaven: nevertheless it is not in my own merits but in thine I place my confidence. Have mercy on me

TUESDAY.

Jesus a Prisoner in his Incarnation

1st Point. Consider—there are three sorts of prisoners: the first for crime, the second for debt, the third for war Divine love has reduced the Incarnate Word to be a three-fold prisoner in the womb of his Virgin Mother. He is a prisoner for crime, although innocence itself; because he is become the victim of sinners, that he may satisfy the justice of his Father, and restore them to grace. He is a prisoner for debt; having taken upon him our sins, he is obliged to discharge the penalty. He is a prisoner of war: love has vanquished and reduced him to this state. Love triumphs over the force of his anger and the attributes of his majesty. Love encloses his immensity in a point, his eternity in a moment, his immortality in a mortal body, his wisdom and omnipotence in the simplicity and weakness of infancy. Admire his bounty, and place all your confidence in his mercy. Acknowledge that you are a criminal, and were justice rendered to you, you could expect nothing but a prison of flames and an eternity of darkness. Confess that you are an insolvent debtor. Beseech the eternal Father, in the name of his divine Son, to remit the punishment due to your offences, as you forgive those who have offended you. Imitate the charity of your Saviour, in freeing souls from purgatory, unbinding the chains of sinners, and imparting consolation to the prisoner.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus will only issue from his prison to embrace the cross and death. On this he had resolved before entering therein; and if his ardent charity had not been governed by an infinite wisdom, he would have anticipated the term of his coming forth, to satisfy his burning zeal for our salvation and the

glory of his Father. Thus the Royal Prophet considers him, though yet an infant, as a giant commencing his career with an inconceivable alacrity. Learn from hence, first, that your life should be a perpetual captivity of love, and that religion, to which God has called you, is a prison whence you should never come forth, in thought or effect, but to enter into heaven. Learn, secondly, that you only live in order to die, that every moment of life approximates to death, but that the last is unknown to you. Be then always ready, and only consider time precious when it is employed in disposing you for that last moment which is to bear away the crown.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus being on the point of ascending into heaven, is once more bound by his charity, and made prisoner in the holy Sacrament, even to the end of ages. O wonderful prison! O devoted captive, who, to satisfy his beneficence, by a miracle of power and love, whilst ascending into heaven, there to manifest his glory, remaineth at the same time on earth, to dwell with us and in us, by a presence as real and true as it is secret and invisible. O my soul, behold thy Saviour twice the victim of charity, twice within a narrow captivity, twice bound with the chains of love, to deliver himself to thee without reserve. Shall not this victorious love have power to make thee once his prisoner, and render him master of thy heart?

O Increated Wisdom! that couldst bind a God, canst thou not, if thou wilt, arrest a sinner? Do so, then, I conjure thee, and render me for ever the captive of Jesus and Mary. I desire it with my whole heart, for the chains that attach us to their service are the pledges of our salvation and felicity.

WEDNESDAY.

The Solitude of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus enters into solitude the first moment of his incarnation. The Blessed Virgin may be figuratively compared to the desert, where this Divine Infant hides himself; and it should be recollected that she herself was in a profound retreat when the angel announced to her her divine maternity. Do you desire that the Son of God should be born in your soul? Love recollection, and withdraw from useless conversation. Jesus Christ is born in the solitude of the heart; he is not found with the dissipated; because it is in retreat are to be found that peace, innocence, and purity of heart, which constitute his delight. O did we preserve our minds free from all vain occupations, how might we enjoy the presence of Jesus, and the sweetness of his divine consolations!

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus does not anticipate the moment for manifesting to man the glory of God, and his own divine power, by the operation of miracles and the charms of his discourse. He remains in his solitude with perfect submission to the will of his Father, in obscurity, unknown to the world, "which knew him not." Learn that it is better to remain hidden, attending to your own soul, than to perform miracles, neglecting yourself. The glory of a religious is, to appear seldom, and neither to see nor be seen by men. Although you should behold the entire world, what is it but vanity? Raise up your eyes to heaven, there to contemplate God, and beseech him to pardon your sins and negligences. Leave vain things to vain men, and for your part meditate only on the commandments of your God. Remain as contented in solitude, when obedience does not otherwise employ you, as if you were convert-

ing the entire world. Close the door of your heart, and invite Jesus, your beloved, into it. Entertain yourself with him in your little retreat; you shall nowhere find so much peace.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus remains not inactive in his solitude. He there treats with his Father of our salvation. Adore the care he takes of your sanctification; correspond with the designs of his providence over you. Endeavour, after his example, to render your solitude agreeable and useful. It will be agreeable, if you consider you are never more with God and with yourself than when alone in the time you give to prayer and self-consideration. It will be not only agreeable, but useful, if you know how to entertain yourself with God, and treat with him of the conversion of sinners, the salvation of souls, and your own perfection. This repose will be more active than action itself, and this leisure more useful than the most important occupations.

Teach me, my Saviour, ever to find employment in my solitude, and solitude in the midst of employments. May each be indifferent to me, provided I accomplish thy holy will. O that I could hold my mind elevated to God! Grant, my Saviour, that I may live in the world as one not of it; let the earth be to me a desert, where I shall neither see nor meet but with thee.

THURSDAY.

The Silence of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus chooses the time of night for his incarnation; because it is a time when all creatures are silent. "When all things were in peaceful silence, and the night in the midst of its course, thy omnipotent Word came down from his royal throne."

(*Wisd.* xviii. 14.) This demonstrates that the time of silence is the most proper for attracting God, and giving him an entrance into our heart. It is easy to lose God by immortification of the tongue; for the scripture says, "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin." (*Prov.* x. 19.) On the contrary, silence elevates the soul to God, and invites him into it. All superfluous discourses that violate the rule of silence, are so many streams that divide the heart, and dissipate the thoughts and affections.

My Saviour, it is the property of wisdom to moderate the tongue, and regulate discourse; since thou art the increated wisdom, be equally the master of my tongue and heart. Direct all my words, and retrench not only what is evil, but also what is useless and superfluous.

2nd Point. Consider—the Son of God is the consubstantial Word of the eternal Father, and the perfect expression of his divine attributes: nevertheless although he entered into the world to make him known to men, he employs only the three last years of his life in preaching and instructing, preserving an admirable silence during the space of thirty years. Why has he done so? First, to cure the wound which the tongue of the serpent had inflicted on our first parents. Secondly, to expiate the sins of the tongue, which are innumerable. Thirdly, to glorify his Father by silence, as he had glorified him from eternity, by the expression of his greatness. In fine, to teach us that silence is the school of wisdom; and that a man that has not learned to hold his peace shall never speak to the purpose. Follow then the example of the Incarnate Word: be a religious observer of silence from these same motives—that is to say, in order to heal the evil inclination of corrupt nature, that causes faults of the tongue; to atone for sins committed by it; to pay homage to the infinite greatness of God who surpasses all our praise; and to obtain from the Holy Spirit the lights necessary

when you ought to speak, so that it may be said: It is not you who speak, it is the spirit of your heavenly Father that speaks in you.

3rd Point. Consider—the silence observed by religious, originates in that of the Incarnate Word. Therefore you should account it as sacred; and as you respect the image that represents this divine Infant, you should also revere this holy practice, which is an image of his silence, and an excellent disposition for prayer, communion, and the presence of God.

Eternal Word! whom love has rendered mute as an infant, without prejudice to thy wisdom, place the seal of thy silence on my lips; that my tongue on which thou art laid in the adorable sacrament, may never sully its purity, or be rendered unworthy of receiving thee. Arrest its sallies by thy presence, and grant that I may forget the language of the world, to learn that of thy heart.

FRIDAY.

The Prayer of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—prayer was the chief occupation of Jesus from the moment of his incarnation until that of his death. We may say that prayer was his life, and his life a continual prayer: He perfectly accomplished that which he inculcated to his disciples, that we must always pray. The saints have followed his example, and have always endeavoured to keep their hearts united with God, in as much as human weakness would permit. If you cannot continue this exercise as uninterruptedly, at least endeavour to begin and end each action by prayer. Never undertake any thing until you have called God to your aid, that you

may do nothing but in union with him, since without his assistance you can do nothing but evil. Moreover, in concluding each act, omit not to give the glory to God, if it has succeeded, and to ask pardon if you have committed any fault. If you observe this practice with exactitude, you will soon arrive at perfection.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus being the Saviour and Mediator of men, prays generally for all, and obtains by his prayers the graces necessary for their salvation. Relying on this truth, place all your confidence in Jesus Christ, and be assured he has obtained for you the graces you require for arriving at sanctity here, and eternal felicity hereafter. But in praying for you he has not dispensed with your praying for yourself and your own perfection. One of the greatest graces he has obtained for you is the grace of prayer. Be then a lover of prayer; and that you may profit the more by it, unite your will to that of your divine Master; neither ask nor desire any thing but that which he himself has demanded for you. Say with St. Teresa: O my amiable Saviour, why should I ask any thing but what thou art pleased to give me? Accomplish in me, Lord, all the designs which it has pleased thee to form for me. All my happiness consists in willing only what thou willest, and abandoning myself entirely to thy good pleasure. Chastise me not in thy anger, O Lord, by granting my desires; but rather destroy in me the desires of self-love, that I may find my life in thy love, and in the accomplishment of thy holy will.

3rd Point. Consider—although Jesus prays for and extends to all the effects of his charity, nevertheless he prays especially for some, principally for his elect, and above all, for his blessed Mother. Look upon her as the sanctuary where he offers his prayer as the temple where this sovereign Pontiff commences his sacrifice. Is it not just that she should have the

largest share in his prayers as well as in his merits? St. John Damascene calls her the fruit of prayer. If prayer has produced a fruit so blessed, and operated so great a miracle of grace, it was not so much the prayer of her parents, as that of her well-beloved Son.

O Blessed Virgin, temple of the Divinity, throne of the Father, sanctuary of the Son, dwelling of the Holy Ghost, present our vows to our High Priest, that he may rectify them if they are not according to his heart, and grant them if conformable to his designs.

SATURDAY.

Sufferings of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus begins to suffer from the first moment of his incarnation. He suffers with an entire knowledge, which considerably augments his pain. He suffers with an entire resignation, humbly accepting the chalice presented by his Father. He suffers without delay or reserve. He does not defer a moment to assume the penalty due to our sins O what excess of charity towards you! Jesus will not be a moment without suffering for your sake; and you cannot suffer a moment in his service. Are you not amazed at his bounty, and confounded at your own coldness and ingratitude? Why do you delay to rank yourself under the banner of the cross? Hasten to do penance: begin from this moment to mortify yourself, and to bear the yoke of your master. But little time remains for you.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus, not content with enduring his present sufferings, anticipates the future; and as he cannot yet place his sacred body on the cross, he nails his heart thereon. Instead of

of immortal delights, his Father presents chains to bind, thorns to crown, and scourges to tear him. O what a reception on his entering the world! But does he refuse these torments? Does he demand delay? Does he recoil? Does he allege excuses? Does he represent the dignity of his person, his innocence, and his merit? Does he transfer them to another? Does he only accept them in part? Ah! no; he accepts all. He offers his head to thorns, his hands to bonds, his face to be spit upon, his body to the cross and death. Yes, my Father, I willingly accept all the dispositions of thy sweet providence, however severe they seem to my senses; thy good pleasure is sufficient to make me love them. Such is the heart of Jesus: in what does yours resemble him? He goes to meet the cross; and you cowardly fly from it. He calls for suffering; and you repel it with horror. Crush this delicacy; encourage yourself to suffer something for him who has suffered all things for you.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus not only feels his own pains; his love makes him sensible of the sufferings of his blessed Mother, the torments of the martyrs, the tears of penitents, the labours and persecutions of all the saints. His heart tastes of their bitterness, and by compassion he suffers with all, and more than all. There have been saints who, in the fervour of love, desired to prolong their life even to the end of the world, that they might suffer a new martyrdom at each instant; but they have not obtained the effect of their desires, although they had the merit. The Son of God alone has borne in his heart the feeling of all the miseries that man ever had, or ever shall have, even to the consummation of ages.

O my Saviour, what a generous heart hast thou imprisoned in this little body, if I may so speak. Ah! how narrow is my heart when compared with thine! How little am I touched by the sufferings of my neigh-

bour, and how sensible to my own! What obduracy and what tenderness at the same time: what tenderness for myself, what hardness in believing and feeling the affliction of others!

FOURTH SUNDAY,

OR THE FEAST OF THE EXPECTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

The holy Desires with which Jesus inspires his Blessed Mother.

1st POINT. Consider—Jesus is united with his Blessed Mother, as the fruit with the tree that produces it, with this difference, that the fruit draws its nourishment from the tree that bears it, whilst Jesus communicates his perfections, inclinations, and desires to the Blessed Virgin. The first desire she forms by the inspiration of her divine Son, is to give him to men as their Saviour and Redeemer. Of what use is a treasure hidden? and what avails wisdom, if it remains unknown? Jesus is a treasure the Eternal Father has confided to Mary, that he may become the ransom of sinners. She bears within her breast the Eternal wisdom, not for herself alone, but to communicate to us her riches, without fearing to exhaust them, because they are infinite. O Blessed Virgin, how great is thy charity! Knowest thou that in giving us thy dear Son, thou abandonest him to the cross and death? If he charges himself with our crimes, he must endure the penalty, and efface their ignominy with his blood and life. Alas! thou knowest that this will be the consequence; and nevertheless, whatever horror thou feelest at the thought, thy zeal to succour us miserable creatures prevails above every

other consideration. Ah! may heaven and earth eternally praise this excessive bounty!

O my sovereign advocate, I beseech you to obtain for me two things equally necessary. Give unto me your divine Son, without whom I should be for ever poor: and give me to your Son, who is my wisdom and light, and without whom I should be for ever in darkness.

2nd Point. Consider—the second desire of the Blessed Virgin is to see Jesus. Her eyes would behold the object her heart so tenderly loves. The desires of the patriarchs and prophets, who so ardently sighed for the Messiah, are coldness when compared with those of Mary. The intensity of her desires surpasses the united ardour of all the seraphim. Compare your coldness with the fervour of her devotion, and accuse yourself of having so little love of Jesus Christ. Why do so many useless desires disturb your heart? You should only desire two things in this world: one is, to possess Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament, as the Blessed Virgin possessed him in the incarnation; the other, to behold him glorious in heaven, as the Blessed Virgin beheld him passable in the manger. The former is the consolation and happiness of earth; the latter, the joy and felicity of paradise.

3rd Point. Consider—the third desire of the Blessed Virgin is, to serve Jesus Christ as her Son and her God. As her Son, she desires to render him the most devoted cares of maternal love. As her God, she desires to adore him with the most profound submission of the humblest servant. As her Son and her God. she desires to consecrate to him every instant of her life, every movement of her heart, without division or reserve. Renew this day, after her example, the resolution you have formed to serve God more faithfully, and propose seriously to employ this day therein. It is but a short time, yet it may perhaps be longer

than that of your life. Consider the day well employed, if you can by frequent acts, enkindle in your heart the desire of serving God, of seeing God, and of communicating to the whole world the knowledge and love of God and of Jesus Christ his only Son.

O Virgin Mother of God! that I could place in thy hands the hearts of all men, to be consecrated as an offering of gratitude for the favours conferred on us through thy mediation! Accept at least the only one over which I have power, my own—faithless and guilty though it may be—that presented by thy pure hands it may become an oblation worthy of thy divine Son.

MONDAY.

The Poverty of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—all things were made by the Word, and consequently all things belonged to him. Nevertheless he despoils himself of all in his incarnation, and makes himself poor for love of us. "You know," says St. Paul, "what has been the goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ, who being rich became poor for love of you, that you might become rich by his poverty." (*Cor.* viii. 9.) Compare this mercy of the Son of God with your ingratitude, and his total privation with your inordinate attachment to your own conveniences. Jesus loves poverty; and not finding it in the bosom of his heavenly Father, he comes to seek it in that of his blessed Mother. You, far from seeking, fly from it; when it presents itself, you endeavour as far as possible to avoid it. Jesus experiences the effects of extreme poverty, and you are contented with the honourable title and vow of poverty, without being willing to suffer any of its privations. Jesus

proposes to be born, to live, and to die in poverty. You cannot bear to want anything; you are solicitous in providing, and disquieted under privations. You are not content with necessaries, you seek superfluities. Compare your life with your state, yourself with Jesus Christ, and consider how you imitate this admirable model.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus not only despoils himself of all things; he renounces himself to become ours. He had given us an entire world by the act of creation; but *himself* he had reserved. In the incarnation he reserves nothing, he gives himself to us, not for time, but eternity. He begins to be ours for ever, if we lose him not through our own fault. All true religious are then rich! though poor in their cell, they are rich in their conscience, and their repose is more tranquil on their hard bed, than that of the rich man in purple and silk.

O Saviour of the world, how rich is the man who possesses thee! All little and poor as thou art, thy value is above all earthly riches. O did the world know thee! O did it know the price of this evangelical pearl that Mary has conceived! Happy would I be could I enclose it within my heart! What should I not give to purchase it? Should I not leave all things? Should I not renounce myself? What can be wanting to him who possesses Jesus? If the poverty of Jesus makes us rich, what may we not hope from his treasures?

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus having reserved nothing, is reduced to have need of us. David, heretofore, said to God, "Lord, thou art my God; because thou needest not my goods." (*Psalm* xv. 2.) Thou art wisdom, thou wantest not my counsels. Thou art the sovereign judge, thou needest not that I should usurp that function. But behold here a marvellous change. God has made himself so poor, that he cannot

live, or be clothed, or nourished, without the aid of his creatures. Let us no longer fear our judge, says St Maximus: he is poor, we can gain him by our presents, he will not refuse them. If you say you have nothing to offer to the Son of God, I reply, you have only to give him your heart; he will be satisfied, for it is what he most desires; he seeks everywhere hearts that love him, but he finds none. He complains not of hunger or thirst; but he complains of having so few friends, notwithstanding that he loves all men with such ardent tenderness.

My soul, how long wilt thou give him cause for this complaint? How long wilt thou continue to reject his friendship? O my Saviour, pardon the obdurate, selfish, and malignant traitor, who for the future devotes to thee and thee alone every thought and affection of his heart.

TUESDAY.

The Submission and Obedience of Jesus in his Incarnation

1st Point. Consider—Jesus draws his being from the obedience of the Blessed Virgin,—"Behold the hand-maid," &c. O how efficacious is this fiat! It is not a word of command, like that which drew the world forth from nothing; it is a word of submission and obedience: but this obedience gives a being to the Creator, destroys the tyranny of the devil, and re-establishes peace between God and man. The apostle says, "As all die in Adam, all revive in Jesus Christ," (1 *Cor.* xv. 22;) and Jesus Christ, who is "the resurrection and the life," (*Cor.* xv. 21,) is the fruit of the obedience that Mary renders to the Eternal Father. O Blessed Virgin, who can sufficiently admire the power of thy obedience? How powerful is the will of man,

when submissive to that of God! If you would subject yourself to the divine pleasure, Jesus would immediately be born in your heart. Why does God not bless your designs? and why does all you undertake succeed so ill, and produce so little spiritual profit? It is because you do your own will and not his; he has no part in your counsels, you only consult your own interest. You say to him every day, "Thy will be done;" but it proceeds not from your heart. You will what God wills, but you do not will it strongly; you do not will it entirely; it is in that you fail. Your weak and inconstant will continually wavers between heaven and earth.

2nd POINT. Consider—the obedience of the Blessed Virgin having raised her to the dignity of Mother of God, her divine Son would dwell in her during the time appointed by his Eternal Father: he does not prolong, neither does he shorten it. He measures not the time to his desires, but accommodates his desires to the time, without retarding or advancing it a single moment. Moreover, that which he does in the commencement of his life, he will continue until the end; and his death will be the completion of his obedience, which shall fulfil those words in their full extent: I do always that which he wills, and I will do it to the last sigh. Admire this punctual obedience, the want of which has caused so much disorder in your life. You obey, but out of time; you speak when you should be silent; you employ the time appointed for one duty in a different one. You can never make any considerable progress in perfection, if your life is not according to your rule, if you are not exact in observing the orders of obedience, and doing each action in the time and manner prescribed.

3rd POINT. Consider—Jesus not only submits to the will of his heavenly Father; he would also obey his Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, the princes, judges,

servants, in a word, all men. He would be ranked among the vassals of the Roman emperor, and assume the badge of circumcision, in order to be subject to the law. In fine, he beholds his Eternal Father in creatures, and renders him obedience in the persons of all those who represent his power on earth. He passes yet further; for he would obey even the executioners who put him to death.

O prodigious annihilation! What excuse, O Lord, can our pride find henceforth? Thou renouncest thy will, though thou art God; and I would do mine who am but a worm of the earth. Thou art pleased to obey, and I would command. Ah! Lord, am I not thy slave? Crush my pride by thy submission, and grant I may serve and respect thee in the persons of my brethren. Enlighten my understanding to perceive and feel the important truth, that it is too great an honour to be the last in thy house.

WEDNESDAY.

The Humiliations of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—the infinite humiliation of the Word Incarnate, descending from the throne of his glory to the lowly place of his conception. Although the Blessed Virgin exceeds in purity and sanctity the most elevated of the heavenly spirits, yet the Church, admiring the infinite disproportion between the Creator and the creature, exclaims in astonishment: Thou hadst no horror of the Virgin's womb. Ponder the humiliation of the Son of God, who, through an inconceivable condescension, disdains not to enter our breasts, and become the food of our souls. O incomprehensible wonder! Daily does the Lord Jesus

humble himself as he did in descending from his royal throne to become incarnate for us. Daily does he come to us with sensible marks of humility. Daily does he descend at the voice of his minister from the bosom of his eternal Father, to dwell on our altars. O how pure should be the heart which is to lodge the Holy of Holies! "If thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the sanctity of St. John Baptist, thou wouldst not be worthy to receive this sacrament. Purify therefore the dwelling of thy heart: banish thence the world and the tumult of the passions. Know, nevertheless, thou canst not sufficiently prepare thyself by the merit of any action of thine, although thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole year together, and think of nothing else." (*Imitat. Christ*, b. 4.)

2nd POINT. Consider—Jesus humbles himself infinitely beneath the majesty of his Father, by the submission of his soul, although it is united with the Divinity. The more the Father glorifies the Son, the more profoundly the Son abases himself before his Father. It would seem he only ascends the throne of the Divinity in order to descend the lower, and render his annihilation more profound. How opposed is the spirit of Jesus to that of the world, and to the vanity which makes you so often forget your own baseness! The least breath of praise inflates you with pride; a word suffices to raise you to the clouds. A passing feeling of sensible devotion fills you with secret self-complaisance, and you think yourself something. Distrust this self-love, and guard lest it be nourished by the consolations of heaven. The gifts of God humble great souls, and render them more fearful; because they know they must render an account thereof, and that it is dangerous not only to abuse, but also not to profit by them.

3rd POINT. Consider—Jesus, not content with humbling himself before his Father, proposes, for his sake

to abase himself beneath all men, to fly honour, to converse with the poor, to wash the feet of his disciples, to accept the contempt and opprobrium which the pride and envy of the Pharisees shall cause him to suffer. Already he renounces every mark of greatness which could attract respect and esteem: and although he is King of kings, he prefers the quality of servant to the title of monarch, as more appropriate to his design of becoming the least of all. Even now he invites you to follow him, and by his eloquent example says: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (*Matt.* xi. 29.) Remember this lesson. Hear with what respect he speaks interiorly to his heavenly Father: "O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid." (*Psalm* cxv. 16.)

O Jesus, who, in thy incarnation, didst embrace humiliation as thy inseparable companion until death, destroy in my heart every sentiment of vanity; that my life may be conformable to thine, and that I may place all my glory and ambition in participating in thy humiliations and contempts.

THURSDAY.

The Weakness of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider.—Jesus could have entered the world with the marks of his royal power, and in the vigour of manhood, yet he prefers assuming the weakness of infancy, and suffers by election what other infants suffer from necessity. First, he is so weak as not to be able to pronounce a word, either to complain or declare his wants. He could, as Theodoret says, make his voice resound from the heavens, but he chooses rather to weep in the manger, and remain

mute in the Virgin's womb, to teach you to suffer in silence, and hide your little inconveniences as a treasure, lest they be taken from you—not to dispute in words, to yield modestly, as if you were without reply; to bear injuries, as if you felt them not; in fine, to restrain your tongue when impelled by passion, "as a man not having reproof in his mouth."

Incarnate Word! grant me thy grace to practise the admirable lessons thou teachest; and let my tongue cleave to my palate when I am tempted to manifest the trouble and disorder of my irregular affections. May I say with Moses: "I cannot speak." I must, by silence, imitate the infant Jesus. His weakness is my strength, his simplicity my defence.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus is so weak as to be incapable of all motion, except that which is natural to unborn infants, to teach you to repress the movements of corrupt nature, and only to act by those of obedience and grace You must so bind and weaken self-love that it can no longer oppose divine love in your heart. The more you captivate it, the more vigorous will your mind become for advancing towards perfection. Be not afflicted when corporal infirmity obliges you to remain inactive, but rather say with St. Paul: "I glory in my infirmity, I delight in being despised as a useless person; and far from being dejected in the condition to which I am reduced for the love of Jesus Christ, it constitutes the subject of my glory; because when I am weak, then I am strong, I am nearer unto God, the virtue of Jesus Christ dwells in me, and manifests its power so much the more as I can attribute nothing to my own strength and industry."

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus is so weak he cannot use the exterior organs of his body. He can neither see nor hear; feeling is the only sense that is free, and it is so only to suffer. This should oblige you to mortify your senses, since it is to expiate their indulgence

the Son of God is reduced to extreme weakness. Repress the curiosity and wandering of your eyes, which often endangers the purity of the heart. Father Faber, of the Society of Jesus, often deprived his sight of the most innocent objects, that he might be farther removed from those that were dangerous.

Divine Infant! who wouldst bear my infirmities, in order to communicate to me thy strength, grant that I may be deaf, blind, dumb, and impotent for evil, that my virtue may be perfected in infirmity, and that being weak and innocent as a child with regard to evil, I may be gifted by thee with the strength and courage of the saints for effecting good.

FRIDAY.

The Dependence of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus, who is sovereignly independent in the bosom of his eternal Father, is reduced to the lowest dependence in his incarnation. Whereas he receives his divine being and life from his Father without any dependence, he may be said to be a dependent on his blessed Mother for his mortal life and being. What a glory for the Virgin! What a humiliation for Jesus! What a prodigy, that a God should take his life from his creature! Learn to depend on the Mother and the Son: from Him you hold the life of nature and grace; through her you expect the preservation of both;—from Him you hope for glory; through her you expect the grace that will enable you to obtain it. Love your dependence, it is your happiness. Dispose not of a single moment of your life, but for the glory of him that has given it; abandon yourself entirely to his conduct. Your repose

and happiness depend on this abandonment. Should you withdraw from it your life would be miserable.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus depends on his blessed Mother for his support; the heart of an unborn infant is too weak to act of itself, it must be sustained by that of the mother. If your heart is too weak to practise mortification, and endure all that is painful to sense in the exercise of a spiritual life, make use of those of Jesus and Mary: draw from them your support. Remember that in the Blessed Eucharist is communicated to you the same blood which he received from his blessed Mother; that being fed with the same nourishment, your life may resemble his.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus depends on his blessed Mother for his preservation. What condescension in the Son of God thus to subject himself to human misery! He is unable to defend himself, if we consider the natural strength of his tender and delicate body; his preservation depends entirely on his blessed Mother. Learn to live under the protection of Mary, and know that nothing is more frail than the life of grace; a word, a thought, a look may deprive you of it. Alone you are too weak to preserve so precious a treasure. Distrust yourself, be always fearful of losing it, and recur continually to your blessed Mother, whose aid will never fail, if you do not withdraw yourself from her protection.

O Blessed Virgin! my salvation depends on you; if you abandon me, I must perish. Watch then for my defence; take me under your protection; remember that your most dear Son lives in me by grace, but he is yet weak in my heart; obtain for me that he may not die therein, but rather that he may become daily more strong in all that regards his glory and my perfection.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

The Holy Desires of Jesus in his Incarnation.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus is inflamed with an ardent desire to glorify his Father, and manifest Him to men. He proposes to himself the honour and service of God as the centre of all his affections, and the end of all his actions. His example has inspired the saints with an admirable zeal for the glory of God: all their fervour was but an emanation of that furnace of love in which his soul was consumed. "I seek not my own glory." "My glory is nothing." (*John*, viii.) I make no account of the applause of men. What ardour and purity of love! Approach this fire to enkindle your zeal, and purify your intentions from the self-love that sullies all your good works. Examine your desires, and the secret movements of your heart. Can you say, with Jesus, that you seek not your own honour, that you despise reputation and the praise of men; that all your cares and desires tend only to the greater glory of God? Your profession obliges you hereto; and one day you will have to pass through the fire of divine justice, if you be not previously purified in that of love.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus, beholding the love his Father bears to men, for whose salvation he sent him into the world, burns with an ardent desire to trace for them a perfect model of all virtues, to employ his power in relieving their miseries, and his wisdom in teaching them the way to heaven. To this object he dedicates all the labours and sufferings of his life; referring the glory to his eternal Father, and transferring to man all the merit. O liberality of Jesus, what a treasure art thou to us! What use do you make of this treasure? Whence comes it that you remain so

poor amidst such riches? Faithless soul! you have before your eyes the humility, patience, charity, meekness, fortitude, and all the other virtues that Jesus Christ has exercised from the purest motives, and in a manner all divine. How have you hitherto profited by his example? Whence comes it that you have not yet acquired any solid virtue? Your obedience is only the shell; the soul that should animate it is wanting. Your devotion is only exterior; the respectful remembrance and sentiment of the presence of God do not enliven it. You offer an imperfect victim, without heart or spirit.

Spirit of Jesus, animate my heart, and elevate my intentions, that I may become a perfect imitator of thy heroic virtues.

3rd Point. Consider—these two desires of Jesus produce a third, which is, to enter into the world, to be born in a manger, as a preparation for the cross; to confer on the Blessed Virgin the glorious title of Mother of God; in fine, to gain our hearts, and bring peace to the world by his birth. O that you loved Jesus Christ as he has loved you! O that you would prepare a place for this Divine Infant in the midst of your heart! Though that heart may be now but a vile stable from the impurity of its affections, and a rock by its obduracy, Jesus Christ would soon change it into a paradise by his presence.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

The Blessed Virgin brings forth the Saviour of the world in the Stable of Bethlehem.

1st Prelude. Enter in spirit into the stable of Bethlehem, where with the Blessed Virgin you will find Saint Joseph, and many blessed spirits, amongst whom is your Angel Guardian.

2nd PRELUDE. Beg grace to honour this mystery, to taste of its sweetness, and draw profit from it.

1st POINT. Consider—the *patience* with which the Blessed Virgin suffers the ungrateful reception her divine Son meets in Bethlehem. She seeks every where for a lodging, and every one rejects her, because she is poor. She is constrained to retire into a stable with the infant that she is soon to give to the world. She enters it with an admirable meekness, without complaining of the inconvenience of this comfortless abode. She respects in this conjuncture the order of God, and the sweet dispositions of his providence. O my soul, where is thy patience? Thou canst not suffer the least contempt without indignation. Art thou greater than the Mother of God? Where is the respect thou owest to Jesus Christ? How often hast thou refused him an entrance into thy heart? He knocks at the door by his inspirations; he awaits patiently, and thou attendest not to him: dost thou not fear that he will reject thee in his turn, and that when thou knockest at the door of heaven, he will answer, "The door is shut?"

O my Saviour, I am resolved to dispose my heart for thy reception, by banishing thence all that can displease thee Enter it as my God, to be adored; as Author of Grace, to destroy sin; as Protector, to repel my enemies; as Master, to teach the practice of all virtues; and as a Treasure, to enrich me with all good.

2nd POINT. Consider—that the Blessed Virgin, being retired in prayer, rapt in heavenly contemplation, and glowing with intense love, brings forth her Divine Son with inconceivable joy and miraculous purity. With what humility and devotion does this blessed Mother behold her Son, the fruit of benediction, "the desire of the eternal hills." She adores him as her God, embraces him as her Son: she clothes him, and lays him in the manger, whilst her eyes and heart are immoveably fixed on him.

O Blessed Virgin, how great is my joy to behold thee mother of such a Son! Immortal thanks to the eternal Father, who hath given him to us; to the Son, who hath united himself to our nature; to the Holy Ghost, who hath formed this sacred humanity in thy virginal womb; thanks to thee, O Blessed Virgin, who hadst borne him nine months; to St. Joseph, who hath so carefully guarded his tender infancy, and ministered to his wants.

3rd Point. Consider—the holy occupation of the Blessed Virgin attending her new-born infant; her joy in being mother of such a Son; the delight with which she beholds "the most beautiful amongst the children of men;" the respect with which she adores him—the holy fervour with which she offers herself to fulfil the duties of Mother and servant—the homage and obedience she tenders to him as her Sovereign, and the ardour with which she desires the execution of his designs for the salvation of man.

Most holy and happy Mother of God, allow me to participate in thy joy, since thou art my sovereign mistress, and I am thy devoted servant. Teach me thyself to adore thy Divine Son, to render him my homage, and consecrate myself to the accomplishment of his most holy will Offer him my vows, offer him my whole being; beseech him to be a Saviour to me, that I may find access to him, and draw fruit from his nativity; that his weakness may be my strength, his pains my consolation, his poverty my riches, and his tears my happiness.

SECOND DAY OF THE OCTAVE.

On the Birth of Jesus in the Stable of Bethlehem.

1st Point. Consider—who is this new-born infant? He whom you behold laid in the manger, trembling

with cold, and seemingly in all things like unto other infants, is nevertheless the Son of the living God, the heir of all his Eternal Father's possessions, the living image of his substance, the Wonderful, the Mighty One, the Omnipotent, the Saviour of mankind. What has wrought this stupendous prodigy, and reduced sovereign greatness to this abjection? It is his love for you. For you he is become man; for you he is born in a stable. What have you done for him? What have you done for yourself? What inconvenience, humiliation, or suffering have you endured for his glory and your own salvation? Can you expect to gain heaven by the indulgence of vanity, sloth, or self-will? Such is not the example given you by this little one.

2nd Point. Consider—the circumstances of his birth. He enters the world poor, weak, and humble, a stranger, unknown, and unprotected by any. How opposed is the spirit of God to that of the world! The Son of God chooses poverty; the world values only riches and honours. Which will you follow, the one that leads to beatitude, or the other which leads to perdition? The Son of God takes his delight in the humble; he abases himself to a familiarity with little ones; he embraces their condition, and makes himself little with them. Do you desire to enjoy a familiarity with God? Love abjection, prefer the conversation of the poor, to that of the rich of this world, who are often the most remote from heaven. The Son of God would be born in the lowliest and most inconvenient place. The world esteems only pomp and self-ease. Of which does your practice prove your esteem? You cannot be deceived in following the judgment of God; but in adhering to that of men you will surely err. In fine, the Son of God at his birth exercises obedience, in submitting to the edict of Cæsar, and ranking himself among his vassals, that your name might be written in the book of life. How far removed is this spirit from

that of the world, which would always command, and never obeys but with regret.

3rd Point. Consider—in this new-born babe the difference between heaven and earth—the stable, which is the place of his temporal birth, and the bosom of his Father, whence he draws his eternal being; in a word, between what he is as God, and as an infant in the crib. As God he is begotten in the splendour of his Father's glory, as man he is born amid the darkness of sinners. As God he is clothed with majesty and power; as man he bears the garb of poverty. As God he sustains all things by his word; as man he is not able to support himself, but is borne in the arms of his mother. Happy Mother, who bearest the treasure of the eternal Father, to impart it to men! Happy Infant, not less adorable in the crib and in the bosom of thy Mother, than in the splendour of thy Father's glory! I envy not the pomp and riches of the world; but I beg of thee the spirit of humility, of which thou givest me so signal an example; the spirit of poverty, which thou voluntarily embracest to make me partaker of thy riches; the spirit of obedience, which causes thee to be born between two vile animals, and which will hereafter fasten thee to the gibbet between two thieves.

THIRD DAY OF THE OCTAVE.

Sentiments of a devout soul on the Birth of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"This day is born to you a Saviour." Come, faithful soul, participate in the joy of his birth; ye just, rejoice in God your Saviour; for the Holy of Holies is born to restore innocence and virtue to the world! Be consoled, ye sinners, because a Saviour is born, who will deliver his people from their sins! Let the afflicted cease to sigh, for a comforter is

given to sweeten their pains, a physician to heal their wounds, a charitable friend to discharge their debts! "Come, let us praise the Lord with gladness; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour." (*Ps.* xciv.) Let us present ourselves before this divine Infant, celebrating his praise; let our hymns and canticles resound at his crib; and let us not go forth from this stable which he has chosen for the place of his nativity. Rejoice, daughter of Sion; Jerusalem, exult with gladness, because this day peace has descended on the earth, the true light has illumined the darkness of the world, and Israel rejoiceth in the birth of her king! Glory and praise to the most Holy Trinity, which hath invented so admirable a means to save man, and confound the pride of the demon!

2nd POINT. Consider—"This day is born to you a Saviour." Approach with confidence to the throne of his mercy. My soul, what fearest thou? Enter this abode, which is the tabernacle of thy divine spouse; enter the house of God, approach without fear, and unite your heart to that of this new-born babe. He will not reject or cast you from him; he will receive you meekly, without reproaching you with your infidelities, and make you feel the effects of his goodness. What canst thou fear from an infant weeping in a manger? He complains not of his sufferings, but he weeps for your sins. He is not come to destroy, but to seek you; not to judge, but to save; not to punish, but to bear himself the penalty of your offences, that you may be discharged therefrom. Be only contrite, and he will pardon you; weep for your sins, and he will efface them with his tears, and supply by the tenderness of his heart for the obduracy of yours.

3rd POINT. Consider—"This day is born to you a Saviour." Enter this poor stable which the King of Heaven has chosen for his dwelling-place, that he may converse familiarly with you. Behold this humble

crib, which contains the treasure of heaven, the ransom of the world, the joy of men and angels! Pray that you may be received into this cave, and pass these days there with Jesus and Mary. Behold a God made man, laid on straw, swathed in poor linen, for your salvation! Prostrate yourself humbly at the feet of this divine Infant, make there an altar to adore him as your God, offering him the sacrifice of your heart. Give it to him without reserve, and beseech him to engrave thereon his most sweet and adorable name Dedicate all the powers of your soul and body to his service; abandon yourself entirely to him, and let him act in you and by you according to his good pleasure, without resistance on your part. Tell him confidently all your pains and difficulties, discover to him the movements of your heart, and he will accomplish all your desires. For he comes in the spirit of humility and meekness to listen to the prayer of the humble, to console the afflicted, to strengthen the weak, and remedy all our infirmities. O my soul, what more can you desire? Your God is so nigh to you, that you can bear him in your arms and press him to your bosom; for "the Word was made flesh and dwelleth amongst us." Ah! that my heart could serve him for a cradle! Ah! that I could become humble at the sight of his abasement, poor at the sight of his desolate manger, patient at the contemplation of his sufferings, penitent at the spectacle of his tears!

O most sweet and humble Babe! thou who hast descended from the throne of thy glory into the dust of the earth, to unite thyself with me, draw me from the earth unto thy throne, that I may be united to thee for ever.

FOURTH DAY OF THE OCTAVE.

The Angels render Homage to Jesus at his Birth.

1st Point. Consider—the joy and astonishment of the angelic host, in beholding the Son of God born in a stable They are amazed to see a God thus humbled; they rejoice that the sun of justice has commenced to shed those beams which shall soon dissipate the darkness of the world, and restore to man the life of grace and glory. Admire the charity of the angels, who rejoice as much for our happiness as for their own. Admire the humility and respect with which they behold the glory of the hypostatic union communicated to human nature, which is inferior to theirs. Learn to love virtue and the favors of God in your brethren, and without envy to see them exalted above you; participate in their happiness, saying with the Prophet: "I respect, my God, all the dispositions of thy providence over thy creatures. I am a partaker with all them that fear thee, and that keep thy commandments." (*Ps* cxviii.)

I offer thee the talents thou hast given me, and all the graces I have received from thee. I consent to be despoiled of them, if such is thy good pleasure, that they may be imparted to another who will make better use of them. If thou art pleased to preserve them to me, I conjure thee to impart still greater to my brethren, to the end thou mayest be more glorified, thy goodness better known, and that those whom thou honourest with thy favors, may supply for the little fruit yielded by those with which I have been favored.

2nd Point. Consider—with what ardour the blessed spirits descend from heaven to adore their new-born King. Admire the devoted submission with which they render him their homage, acknowledging his infinite greatness, power, and wisdom, concealed beneath this

wonderful humiliation Annihilating themselves before him, they acknowledge that, compared with his perfections and prerogatives, their charity is coldness, their light darkness, their strength weakness, their virtue imperfection; confessing that all they possess, whether by nature, grace, or glory, is his gift; in fine, they break forth in strains of the liveliest gratitude, praise, and benediction. Unite with those blessed spirits in honouring your Infant Saviour; beseech them to assist you in thanking the Eternal Father for giving you his divine Son, and to obtain for you grace to reap the fruit of his nativity.

3rd Point. Consider—how the rays that proceed from the countenance of the Son of God, change midnight into a brilliant day, and a stable into a paradise. In the splendour of this light, see how the blessed spirits, after adoring the infant Jesus, offer themselves to be employed in his service according to his will, and particularly to announce his birth to men from whom he met so ungrateful a reception, and who were so unmindful of his benefits. Consider these pure intelligences as glowing mirrors, who receive the beams of the rising sun to reflect them upon us, that we may be inflamed with his love. Imitate their zeal for the salvation of souls, and the glory of their Saviour. Present your soul to this source of living light, as a pure mirror, to receive the rays of his brightness, and return them back upon your neighbour, to draw him forth from the darkness of sin into the admirable light of grace. Be not content to love Jesus yourself, desire that he be known and loved by all men. Make him known as much as you are able, infuse into all hearts his fear and love, and let your only happiness be to see him served and honoured by his creatures.

FIFTH DAY OF THE OCTAVE.

An Angel is sent to the Shepherds.

1st Point. Consider—who are they to whom the Son of God, the Sovereign Monarch of the universe, sends his heavenly ambassadors? To poor and obscure shepherds. Not only did they devote the day to labour, they spent the night in alternate watchings about the flock. Behold the persons whom the angels visit, and who receive the first favours from Jesus Christ. As he is infinitely humble, he willingly communicates himself to the poor and simple. This day he chooses shepherds as the evangelists of his birth; hereafter he shall make fishermen his apostles. O my God, how far removed are thy judgments from those of men! Who would not contemn the honours and riches of this world, seeing that the testimonies of God's love are for those who despise them? Why then despise the poor, since God honours them? Why shun the poor, whom the angels visit? "For see your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." (*Cor.* i. 26.) God prefers those who are poor, vigilant, and laborious. Are you of this number? Are you humble, poor—that is to say, detached from the world? Do you love labour? Are you vigilant in watching over those whom God has confided to your zeal? Say not that you are without a flock. The first flock with which God has entrusted you, is your own heart with all its affections.

2nd Point. Consider—the signs given by the angel. "You shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." (*Luke*, ii. 12.) The humility of our Saviour is manifested in his infant form; his poverty in his swathing bands; his mortification in his crib. Do you desire to know whether Jesus Christ is

born in your soul? Examine if these three signs are to be found in you. Humility, poverty, and mortification, are the livery of the heavenly King, and opposed to the three marks of the kingdom of Satan, the prince of darkness, under whom reign in the world the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. What confusion, O my Saviour, to bear a livery so contrary to thine! When shall I, in imitation of thee, love humility, poverty, and the mortification of the flesh, which thou hast chosen as thy inseparable companions during the whole course of thy life?

Open my eyes, O Lord, and those of all men, to discover the beauty of these three signs of thy empire. Holy Virgin, clothe us in the garments of thy Son; angels of heaven, obtain for us this favour; blessed shepherds, who have beheld him in the crib, may we with you bear this sacred livery, and love it in all those who are clothed therewith.

3rd POINT. Consider—the canticle of the angels: "Glory be to God on high." They publish the glory rendered to God in heaven by the ineffable mystery of the incarnation, which is an inexhaustible subject of eternal praise. Never did the perfections of the Godhead shine forth with such splendour as in this mystery. The angels reiterate the oblation of that glory, which his divine Son offers to him on earth. If the most excellent homage is that given by the humble, what humiliation can equal that of the Incarnate Word, laid in the crib with beasts! In fine, they offer him the glory which man should render to God made man for their salvation. "And on earth, peace to men of good will." The angels announce the peace concluded between God and man, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Although this peace must be signed in his blood, and sealed with the cross, nevertheless, the Incarnate Word having accepted the command, with all the conditions required

for our redemption, the angels already announce this heavenly peace to men of good will. Reflect attentively on it; it is not to men of learning, genius, riches, worldly greatness, or even of excellent natural endowments, the angels promise peace, but to men of good will, who correspond faithfully with the designs of God. He promises you *peace*, reserving to himself the glory. Be content with that which he gives you, and assume not the glory which belongs to him alone. What have you of your own but nothingness and sin? Preserve yourself in peace, and covet not the honour due to God, otherwise you shall possess neither one nor the other, but fall into trouble and confusion.

THE SIXTH DAY OF THE OCTAVE.

The Adoration of the Shepherds.

1st Point. Consider—"Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this Word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste." (*Luke*, ii. 15, 16.) O wise shepherds, with what benedictions of sweetness have you been prevented! Abraham quits his country at the first command; the apostles abandon all to follow their master; and the shepherds, at the first word of the angel, quit their flocks, and repair with speed to the appointed place. The inspirations of God are so many heavenly messengers inviting you to Jesus Christ; obey promptly, lest they grow cold in your heart, and remain without effect. Encourage yourself, saying: Let us go to Jesus. Let us run in the way of his commandments and counsels, as soon as the first ray of his grace shall have touched our hearts. When shall the fire of his love and the light of his spirit, make me renounce myself to seek him? When shall I have the

courage to correspond faithfully with his call? Then, and then only, when the obduracy of my heart shall cease to make resistance, and when I shall become a man of good will.

2nd Point. Consider—the devotion and faith with which the shepherds enter the stable; their happiness in finding Jesus with Mary and Joseph; they adore him with profound respect, offering their humble presents, more agreeable to the King of Glory than the richest gifts. The stable is now become a paradise of delights. "The Lamb is the lamp thereof." (*Apoc.*) Jesus is lodged between Mary and Joseph: Mary, his dear mother, and Joseph, the guardian of his infancy. O Jesus, the only love of Mary and Joseph, grant me mercy for their sakes. O Joseph and Mary, it is between you the shepherds find the infant Jesus; obtain for me grace to find him in the crib wherein he reposes, that is, in the poverty, humility, and sufferings which he has rendered amiable and adorable in his sacred person.

O my divine Master, I come with the shepherds to adore thee in the spirit of faith, simplicity, love, and reverence, in the desire and resolution of blessing thee eternally, and offering a perpetual sacrifice of praise. "Thou art my God, thou needest not my goods." It is the sacrifice of praise that is pleasing and honourable to thee. I will therefore sing a new canticle in the church of the saints, and praise thee in the midst of thy people.

3rd Point. Consider—"And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them." (*Luke*, ii. 20.) How do you come forth from prayer? With what sentiments are you animated after the holy communion? You should always gather from your spiritual exercises these three fruits: a more ardent desire of God's glory, a more profound knowledge of your own

nothingness, and a more firm resolution of correcting your faults. The zeal of the shepherds should be the object of your imitation; they published abroad with such fervour the wonders they had seen, as to delight the hearts of all. It is a sign you have profited by your devotions, if you quit them with a lively desire to speak of God, to bear Jesus Christ into the hearts of others, and impart to them a high esteem of his greatness.

When, O Lord, wilt thou grant me the grace to do in effect what I have so often promised? "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall be ever in my mouth. My soul doth glorify the Lord: let the meek hear and rejoice. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol his name together." (*Ps.* xxxiii. 2, 3, 4.)

SEVENTH DAY OF THE OCTAVE.

The Blessed Virgin lays up all these things in her heart.

1st Point. Consider—the object of the contemplation and interior occupation of the Blessed Virgin is her only Son, and all that passes in his regard. She observes with great attention the words of God, the wonders she beholds, and the mysteries that take place, with all their circumstances. She bore the Divine Word nine months in her womb; but during her whole life she bore him in her heart, attentively meditating on all his words and actions. Such should be the ordinary subject of your prayer and interior occupation during the day. Jesus is your daily bread, the bread of life, nourishing the soul to immortality. The fruit that Mary draws from this holy exercise is, to animate all her exterior actions with the spirit of prayer; to increase continually in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, amassing within her heart a treasure of wisdom,

afterwards to be communicated to the apostles and disciples.

O heart of Mary! ark of the Testament! containing all that is most precious in heaven and on earth, teach us so to meditate on the words and actions of thy Divine Son, and so to cherish them in our hearts, that they may not remain cold and obdurate; but that the lights and affections we derive therefrom may animate all our actions, and serve us as powerful means to increase in sanctity and the edification of our neighbour.

2nd Point. Consider—the sweetness, patience, and humility manifested by the Son and the Mother in this mystery. Compare your defects with their virtues, and enter into a spirit of holy compunction and confusion. Imagine your angel guardian reproaches you with the negligence in which you have passed this year, saying: "Well may you be confounded in considering the life of Jesus Christ, seeing the little care you have taken to conform to his example." (*Imitat.* b. 1, xxv.) Ponder seriously on the remedy to be applied to the defects and passions which have hitherto been most prejudicial to your soul, that you may guard against them in the coming year. How have they grieved the heart of Jesus! What a source of bad example to your brethren, and of injury to yourself! Renew the desire of faithfully fulfilling the duties of your state, and of daily advancing in perfection. Make a firm purpose to walk always in the presence of God; to cultivate a great purity of intention, seeking only in your actions to please his divine Majesty—to live in the bosom of his providence, confiding in his bounty, receiving with resignation his divine appointments, and recurring to him in all your necessities; in fine, to treat with him in your spiritual exercises with all possible reverence, attention, and devotion.

3rd Point. Consider—the means of preserving charity with your neighbour. Make a firm resolution not

to offend him in word or action; to guard your ears against all uncharitable discourse. Prefer yourself to none. Love and esteem all, treating with them in the spirit of meekness and affability, attracting hearts, not to yourself, but to Jesus Christ; consoling the afflicted, and ministering to their wants with tender charity; supporting their defects with patience, remembering we live not with angels but with frail men. Purpose to retrench the excessive care of your body. Watch over the purity of your heart, fly the least sin, and efface those of inadvertence by sincere compunction. Close carefully the gates of your senses, that nothing may enter to disturb the peace of your soul. Examine whether you have advanced or receded in the service of God, in the victory over your passions, and the exercise of good works. Finally, offer these holy resolutions to Jesus Christ in the crib, imploring his benediction and grace for their perfect accomplishment. Invoke the protection of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, your angel guardian, and holy patrons, so to pass the ensuing year that if it be the last of your life, you may have the consolation of having spent it in the divine service.

O sweet Jesus, give me a tender love for thy holy infancy, and filial affection towards thy dear Mother. O Mother of Mercy, Mother of Jesus, obtain for me this grace, that I may place him as a seal upon my heart and my affections for ever.

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

On the spirit with which we should commence the year, in imitation of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—we should begin the year by an ardent desire of salvation. Meditate on the sensible proofs given by Jesus Christ of his will to save you, in

consecrating this first day by his blood, and taking the name of Jesus. With what fidelity should you not correspond with his mercy. The least action of Jesus Christ would have sufficed for your redemption, but in the excess of his charity he would employ for that end the labours of his whole life, and even the last drop of his precious blood. Why this superabundant redemption?—To discover to you the importance of your eternal salvation, and the magnitude of that evil which is inevitable, if you fail in co-operating with the designs of his mercy. Contemplate the blood of this adorable Infant; admire the charity that impels him to give you this early and precious pledge of his love. He is consumed with zeal for your salvation; what is your ardour for his glory?—what for your own interest? Are you convinced that the only affair of importance is to secure a happy eternity—the only evil to be dreaded, the loss of your immortal soul? Endeavour this day to animate yourself with a new fervour, corresponding to that manifested by your Saviour in this mystery.

2nd Point. Consider—we should begin the year by a true circumcision of heart, that is, a general mortification of all vicious inclinations. Jesus Christ coming into the world to destroy sin, begins to efface it by the effusion of his blood. In imitation of his divine example, ground yourself solidly in that fear of God which attracts the benedictions of heaven. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." (*Ps.* cx. 10.) It should also be the beginning of your life. Resolve, at least to enter on the present year in this spirit. "Who is the man that desireth life: who loveth to see good days?" "Keep thy tongue from evil and do good: seek after peace, and pursue it." (*Ps.* xxxiii. 12.) It will not suffice to commence the year by mortification and the fear of God; you should continue it in the same spirit, "bearing always in your body the mortification of Jesus Christ." (3 *Cor.* iv. 10.) He needed

not circumcision, but he submits to this painful law to facilitate for you the exercise of that mortification which should be continual, since concupiscence unceasingly shoots forth evil inclinations; and if you do not deceive yourself, you will always find something to retrench.

3rd Point. Consider—we should begin the year by a fervent love of Jesus Christ, and a holy zeal for the glory due to his adorable name. The Jews, seeing the Son of God weep at the tomb of Lazarus, said one to another: "Behold how he loved him." (*John*, xi. 36.) If tears are a mark of love, this day he sheds not only tears, but the first oblation of his precious blood, which shall one day be poured forth for you on Calvary. Behold how he loves you. How long will you be ungrateful? How long will you suffer self-love to rob him of the first hours of the day, the first movements of your heart, whilst he gives you the first drops of his blood? "You say in the morning: to-day there will be a storm, for the sky is red and lowering," (*Matt.* xvi. 3,) said the Son of God to the Sadducees. O Lord, if the morning sky forbode the tempest, how great is that which the commencement of thy life announces! How early dost thou embrace sufferings and the cross! Alas! how many years have passed away, and I have not yet begun to love thee.

Too long, O Lord, too long have I delayed: this day, this moment, I renew the consecration of my entire being to thee. I come to thee indeed at the eleventh hour. The past is but the record, not merely of my sloth, but of my sins and infidelities—of the darkest ingratitude, the most wanton abuse of thy graces. I feel too well the utter worthlessness of the selfish and guilty heart I present to thee; but nevertheless, as thou camest "not for the just but sinners"—as it was for the guilty thou madest the bloody oblation of this day—as there is no soul so dark and deformed but thy blood is capable of purifying—accept all that I have to offer—my tears,

my compunction, my profound gratitude, my devoted love for the future. God of love, permit me to apply to myself, and aid me to reduce to practice, what thou saidst of Magdalen; that as my debt has been the most grievous, and as the exercise of thy mercy towards me in forgiving it has been the greatest, I may make the return of him "to whom most was forgiven," by loving thee more than others for the future, and commencing every day my future life with the fervour and resolution with which I enter on this year.

SECOND OF JANUARY.

Jesus Christ submits to the law of Circumcision, in obedience to his Eternal Father.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus Christ submits to the law of circumcision, in order to terminate the legal ceremony, and commence the evangelical circumcision, much more perfect than the former. That was only material, this is spiritual, and extends to all the powers of the soul, all the affections of the heart, all the movements of the body; in a word, to all that is contrary to the commandments of God and the evangelic counsels. By this ceremony he commences the office of Saviour, and renders homage to the sovereign dominion of his Father, in assuming the yoke of the law, and repairing the disobedience of Adam, the cause of the ruin of mankind. Learn from hence the obligation and motives for observing faithfully your rules. They proceed from God; the saints who instituted them were inspired by his Holy Spirit. He has called you to religion, to honour him by their observance. Your vocation and your rules are derived from the same source, and tend to the same end. In fine, on your rules is founded the kingdom of Christ. By them he

reigns in your heart. By their observance alone can you render unto him the service he requires. Your rules are the declaration of his will in your regard; all their authority, and that of your superiors, proceed from him; consequently, if you neglect them, you despise his commandments.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ submits to the law of circumcision, though most painful on account of his tender age and delicate complexion. "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith,.....that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood." (*Heb.* xii. 2, 3.) This law was ignominious with regard to the Son of God, since it was a badge of servitude and sin. O profound humility of the Holy of Holies! O inconceivable pride of sinners! Reflect seriously on your servitude to human respect. You fly the confusion of an ingenuous confession. You fear the humiliation of an abject office. Listen to the words of the Son of God. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words: of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his majesty." (*Luke*, ix. 26.) This law was also burdensome in its precepts, for according to St. Paul, "Every man that circumciseth himself, is a debtor to do the whole law." (*Gal.* v. 3.) Enter into this sentiment. Be persuaded that you are no longer free either to transgress or dispense with the observance of your rules. Obey them as if from imperative necessity. Holy Scripture says, that wisdom has chains and bonds. Fear not to bind yourself with them; for they are most honourable chains, and bonds most salutary.

3rd Point. Consider—the spirit with which Jesus Christ submits to the law of circumcision. The painful wound of the legal ceremony which he suffers for us, he changes into the unction of holy baptism, which is a spiritual circumcision of love. Therefore, St. Paul says, "You are circumcised with a circumcision not

made by hand, in despoiling of the body of the flesh, but in the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism." (*Col.* ii. 11, 12.) Our Lord having discharged us from the Jewish ceremony, has imposed on us the obligation of a spiritual circumcision, to be accomplished by the aid of his grace, and the fervour of our love; an obligation we first contract at baptism, in which we are spiritually buried with Jesus Christ. This implies a previous death, for we entomb not the living, but the dead. Learn from the example of your divine Master, a spirit of meekness towards your neighbour, while in your own regard you exercise the interior and exterior mortification, without which you cannot observe your rules, acquire solid virtue, lead a religious life, or strive to attain the perfection of the state to which you are called. "I am the true vine," says Jesus Christ, "and my father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he will take away; and every one that beareth fruit, he will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (*John*, xv. 1, 2.) Take away, O Lord, all that is vicious or defective in my soul, but never suffer me to be separated from thee, as a dead branch fit only to be cast into the fire.

THIRD OF JANUARY.

On Devotion to the Name of Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—the sovereign perfections comprised in the adorable name of Jesus. It embodies, in a single word, the wisdom, goodness, sanctity, power, mercy, and love of God, combined and co-operating for our salvation. It comprehends all the graces, virtues, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, which concur to the sanc-

tification of our souls, since they flow to us from the plenitude of Jesus Christ, as from an inexhaustible source. It signifies master, physician, father, judge, advocate, and pastor. It expresses all the benefits this divine Saviour has conferred on mankind, as the remission of sins, victory over temptations, the acquisition of virtues, the gift of perseverance, communication of glory, and possession of the supreme good. In fine, it represents the sufferings, ignominies, and torments that his ardent zeal for your salvation have caused him to undergo. When you hear, or pronounce this saving name, represent to yourself a God-man, amongst whose perfections, mercy and love shine forth the most conspicuous. As God, "his mercies are above all his works." (*Ps.* cxliv. 9.) As Son of God, he is called by excellence "the image of his Father's goodness." (*Sap.* vii. 26.) As son of man, he has been formed by the Holy Ghost, who is the spirit of love. Resolve to imitate the perfections which are signified by this adorable name; but particularly that devoted charity implied in the name of Jesus.

2nd Point. Consider—true devotion towards the sacred name of Jesus, consists in an efficacious will to attain your own salvation. Thus you will accomplish the most ardent desire of your Saviour. He has abundantly supplied you with means to accomplish perfectly the great, important, only affair of eternity. He has healed all your maladies; he has given you preventives and salutary remedies for every vice; he has delivered you from the power of hell, reconciled you with his Father, cancelled all your debts, removed every obstacle to your salvation, and, by an excess of love, shed even the last drop of his precious blood to satisfy the Divine Justice for your transgressions. But after all, if you make not good use of these graces, in vain has he suffered for you. O what confusion, to have hitherto served him so tepidly! How fervently

should you resolve to do penance, and henceforth to glorify his name, who *has loved you, and washed you in his blood.*

3rd Point. Consider—that solid devotion towards the holy name of Jesus consists in labouring seriously for the salvation of your neighbour. His laborious life and most painful death are incontestible proofs how dear the salvation of a soul is to the Son of God. How should you value a vocation in virtue of which you are associated to the labours and sufferings of Jesus Christ, who places in your hands the diadem of his glory and the sceptre of his power, to regain for him the empire of hearts, and overthrow the tyranny of the demon. What will be your remorse, should your brother perish through your negligence? What if, instead of saving souls, you become a scandal to them by your imperfections and defects? Compare your life with what the spirit of your vocation demands. You should be another Jesus conversing with men, edifying by example, instructing by holy conversation, charitably aiding them in all their necessities, sustaining them by continual prayer, and consuming yourself in their service by the ardour of your zeal. If hitherto you have failed, form the resolution to labour more faithfully in future. Listen to the voice of the blood of Jesus, that cries for mercy, and conjures you by the sweetness of his name, and by the excess of his love, to aid him in the salvation of souls. If you co-operate with him, you will be great in the kingdom of heaven. Your brother, whom you have saved, will be your crown, and Jesus "thy recompense exceeding great." (*Gen.* xv.)

FOURTH OF JANUARY.

How we should bear the Holy Name of Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—it is the character of the predestinate to bear the name of Jesus. We may say that each is a vessel of election, like St. Paul, to bear this adorable name. They are signed with it in heaven, as a mark of glory and triumph; they are signed with it on earth, as a title of sanctity and a mark of the warfare in which they are engaged against the powers of darkness. We, also, must bear it with them, if we desire to rank in their number. But, to bear it worthily, we must enshrine it in our understanding, that it may enlighten us; for which purpose we should make it the object of our most frequent reflection; for amongst all the names which express the grandeur and the mercies of the Incarnate Word, this sweet name in a special manner brings to the mind the most exalted ideas of the Son of God, and most fully comprehends all his divine attributes, perfections, and benefits. Hence we may judge how holy and profitable is the frequent remembrance and meditation of this adorable name, which teaches us to revere, admire, and love all that is amiable and glorious in Jesus Christ.

2nd Point. Consider—we must carefully preserve this sacred name in our hearts, that they may be inflamed with the fire of his divine love; for it most powerfully excites the will to all holy affections, draws us to glorify all the perfections of the Son of God, to give him thanks for his benefits, imitate his virtues, fly all that is displeasing to him, and perform with devotion whatever is commanded by this amiable Saviour, whose name is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. We must also engrave this sacred name on our arm, for the purpose of invigorating us to combat our enemies, and

practise good works. St. Bernard says, you possess a remedy for all your weakness in the holy name of Jesus; for being invoked in commencing your actions, it applies a preventing grace, to overcome your tepidity and inconstancy, and enable you to execute the good thoughts and holy desires it has given birth to in your soul. Therefore you should always bear it impressed on your heart and on your hand, in order that all your thoughts and all your works may tend to Jesus Christ as to their end.

3rd Point. Consider—if this adorable name be imprinted as a seal on your heart and on your hand, it must necessarily be often on your lips; that is to say, you should frequently invoke and endeavour to impress it on the hearts of others. The name of Jesus is a sweet odour that only desires to diffuse itself. It is a spring of living water, which, the more it communicates itself, the more clear and fruitful it becomes. It is a sun, whose light should have no other bounds than those of the universe. O what a favour, could we contribute to the glory of Jesus, and to the veneration due to his sacred name! O that I could consecrate all hearts to his love, and all tongues to publish his glory! After this does my heart sigh!—"In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." (*Phil.* ii. 10, 11.)

O Star of Jacob! O saving name of Jesus! auspicious Star, on which depends my happiness in life and in death. Let every action of mine be henceforth performed under thy influence. If I watch, let Jesus be before my eyes. If I repose, let it be in the heart of Jesus. If I walk, let it be in the company of Jesus. If I am fatigued, let Jesus be my refreshment. If I pray, let Jesus inspire and animate my prayer. If I am sick, let Jesus be my physician. And when I die,

may it be in the bosom of Jesus, who is my life. O Sun of Justice, if thy rising betray that sanguine hue, how dark the sea of blood in which thou wilt set!

FIFTH OF JANUARY.

On bearing the Holy Name of Jesus, continued.

1st Point. Consider—to bear worthily the sacred name of Jesus, it is necessary to be animated by the same spirit with which Jesus Christ has borne it. What virtues did he especially exercise from the moment he received it in circumcision? "He debased himself."—Behold the spirit of humility. "Becoming obedient unto death."—Behold the spirit of obedience. "Even to the death of the cross." (*Phil.* ii. 7, 8.)—Behold the spirit of fortitude and constancy in the sharpest trials, and torments the most dreadful to nature. "Those who bear the name of Jesus," says St. Chrysostom, "need great strength, not only in time of trial, but also in the midst of peace. For they must be resolved to undergo great labours, annihilate themselves, and submit to obedience in things the most humbling and most opposed to the sentiments of corrupt nature. The name of Jesus is a name of salvation, it is therefore a sign of contradiction. We cannot save souls but by the cross; and it is through this sacred sign alone we find our own salvation. It is a name of sanctity and innocence. He that desires to be sealed with it must fly every vice, and therefore no effort must be spared to destroy it. In fine, it is a name implying every virtue. The practice of virtue is indeed difficult; but should we for that lose courage, and fly the Christian warfare, whose ensign is the saving name of Jesus, a name which inspires the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotedness?"

O Lord, suffer not that we should be thus ungrateful. Far from flying the confusion and opprobrium of the cross, let us place therein our glory and our joy because we are redeemed by the glory of thy name. In the cross is the salvation of the world—in the cross are all the benefits of grace and glory—in the cross, O Lord, is thy abode, and it is there I must seek thee if I wish to find thee.

2nd Point. Consider—the signal graces and favours that God imparts to those who worthily bear this holy name. With it is found light, joy, peace, glory, and happiness eternal. If I possess any grace or virtue, it is that God "hath led me on the paths of justice, for his own name's sake." (*Ps.* xxii. 3.) If I hope one day to see the heavenly Jerusalem, that city of unchangeable felicity, it is because all my confidence is founded on the holy name of Jesus. "Thy eyes shall see Jerusalem a rich habitation, a tabernacle that cannot be removed: because you have made account of my name, and that it is held in honour among you." (*Isaiah*, xxxiii. 20.) Behold the true source of every heavenly favour. Ask the apostles to what they are indebted for the conversion of all nations; they will answer that it is to the holy name of Jesus. Ask the martyrs whence they derived the strength that rendered them victorious over all the powers of earth; they will tell you it is from the glorious name of Jesus.

3rd Point. Consider—by the virtue of this holy name, which was engraven in their hearts, the saints arrived at the most eminent degree of grace and glory. For the name of Jesus possesses two admirable qualities: the one exterior, for effecting miraculous works; the other interior, for repressing the violence of passion and temptations of the devil, and leading us to the practice of all virtues. "When the saving name of Jesus presents itself to my mind," says St. Bernard, "and when my soul is enlightened by its rays, my pas-

sions are immediately allayed, my sadness is dissipated, and my temptations vanish. For in pronouncing this sweet name, I represent to myself a man meek and humble of heart, affable, kind, merciful, adorned with every virtue; at the same time I call to mind, that this man is the Omnipotent God who gives me the aid of his grace, while he proposes the example of his life for my imitation. In a word, it seems to me that my heart is replenished with all good, when the name of Jesus sounds on my ear. Place it then," concludes this great saint, "on your heart, on your lips, on your hands; seal it with the powers of your soul, and all your actions; bear it with you continually during life, to the end it may be uttered with your expiring breath, that it may accompany you into heaven, where you shall bless and glorify it for ever."

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

On the glory of Jesus Christ in this Mystery.

1st Point. Consider—this day is infinitely glorious to the Son of God, because on it he displays, in an admirable manner, his sovereign power in heaven and on earth. On earth he is adored by the Magi, and although but an Infant, he causes Herod to tremble. In the heavens he creates a new star, whose miraculous beauty marks the wonders of his birth. The stars were created to enlighten us during the night; and Jesus Christ is come to shed on us his light amid the darkness of this world. The stars show forth their splendour in the heavens, but hide their virtue in the bosom of the earth, where they act by secret influences; and Jesus Christ manifests himself to the blessed by the splendour of his glory, whilst he acts secretly here

below on our hearts by the influences of his grace. Join with St. Augustin in the expression of his praise and wonder: O adorable mystery! Jesus Christ laid in a manger, attracts the wise men from the east. He is hidden in a stable, and manifested in the heavens. He was manifested in the heavens, that, all weak as he seems in the stable, he may be adored by wise men, and dreaded by the wicked. If, while yet an infant in the crib, he causes the haughty powers of earth to tremble, what will it be when he comes in the power of his majesty to judge and punish the crimes of the world?

Divine Source of Light, come, dissipate the darkness of my heart, and teach me to live in such profound humility, that I may stand without fear before thy dread tribunal, when thou shalt come to judge the living and the dead.

2nd Point. Consider—this day is infinitely glorious to the Son of God, because on it he displays a wisdom all divine. He is adored by the wise of the world, who, renouncing the prudence of the flesh to follow the lights of heaven, render homage to the Eternal Wisdom. He condemns the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, and renders poverty precious, ignominy glorious, sufferings desirable, and all that men hold in horror, adorable in his own divine person. In fine, in Herod he confounds the wisdom of the world, making the artifices of the tyrant subservient to the manifestation of his glory. Thus, all wisdom that tends not to eternity, that seeks not Jesus Christ in the humility and poverty of the manger, but is confined within the narrow limits of self-love, is no better than false wisdom and real folly. Is it true wisdom to mistake the means for the end, to quit God for creatures, to know that there is a blessed eternity, and to think only on the present life, which endures but for a moment? "But where is wisdom to be found, and where is the place of

understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof." (*Job*, xxviii. 12, 13.)

Thou alone, O true Light of the world, hast dissipated this darkness, and manifested to us the mode and means of acquiring true wisdom. To thee, then, O Lord, I must have recourse, that I may become truly wise, not according to the world, but according to God.

3rd Point. Consider—this day is infinitely glorious to the Son of God, because in it he displays the excess of his goodness. He is no sooner born than he begins to labour for the salvation of man, without exception of persons. He loves the poor, but he rejects not the rich. If he sends angels to the simple, he gives stars to the learned. He manifests himself first to the shepherds, says St. Thomas, because they represent the apostles, the pastors of his church; afterwards to the Magi, who represent the Gentiles; and to holy Simeon, who represents the Jewish people. Admire a goodness that excludes none, that makes no exception of persons; learn to love all, and to desire that all may participate with you in the benefits of God, and even receive more considerable ones, if it be for the glory of his name. If you possess any advantage over others, either of nature or grace, you will have to render a more rigorous account, because you are more strictly bound to the service of God. The gospel calls not the Magi kings, but sages; because it was not their royal dignity conducted them to Jesus Christ, but that heavenly wisdom which teaches us to despise the world, and follow in all things the lights of grace.

O increated Wisdom! who by the light of thy example hast confounded the prudent of the world, grant that this divine science may be infused into my heart, in order that by directing all my actions into the path thou hast traced, it may lead me to a happy eternity.

SEVENTH OF JANUARY.

The Vocation of the Magi.

1st Point. Consider—that before the birth of Jesus Christ, the world was involved in darkness, crime, and misery. Those are the works of the devil, which the Son of God begins to overthrow by the vocation of the Magi, giving us in their persons, faith to dissipate the darkness of our minds; his love and his grace, to destroy sin; and the promise of salvation to remedy all our miseries. Faith is signified by the star which appeared at the moment of his birth, consequently, during the obscurity of night. Thus, when he would enter into our hearts he first illuminates them with the rays of faith, whose light discovers to us the truths of eternity, and dispels the false maxims of a world that is buried in darkness. This star, says St. Augustin, is the herald of heaven that announces the birth of the Messiah. For he is a hidden God, according to Isaiah. If heaven had not declared his coming, who could have discovered that he was "the God of Israel the Saviour?" (*Isaiah.*) Hence, without faith, neither human reason nor worldly wisdom can understand the ways of God and Salvation. It is the herald of heaven that proclaims to us the perfections, merits, inestimable benefits, and all the wonders operated by Jesus Christ. Bless God who has given you this divine light. Beseech him to increase it in your heart, to impart it to infidels who have never known, and to sinners who close their eyes to its brightness.

2nd Point. Consider—the goodness of the Son of God appears this day in calling us, in the persons of the wise men, to his divine love. He attracts them sweetly by the beauty of a new star; he causes it to move before them, to smooth the difficulties of their journey;

and if he hides it for a time, to purify their love and faith, it is that its re-appearance may increase their joy, and lead them at last to the treasure they are seeking. How excessive the clemency of our divine Lord! He is the first to make advances and seek reconciliation with us, promising to forget all our offences. He condescends to our inclinations, and adapts his lights and graces to the dispositions of our minds. The star represents the means by which God attracts us to his service. That was miraculous, and grace is supernatural. The star appeared at the birth of Jesus Christ—grace is given us in virtue of his incarnation. That miraculous light disappeared for a time—grace is not always sensible, it is sometimes concealed for reasons to us inscrutable. In fine, the star conducted the Magi to Jesus Christ, and to the manger where he was laid—grace conducts us to God and to the cross where he is found. Admire the hidden ways of Providence, that gives to each the grace necessary for salvation. How have you corresponded with that which you have received? When will you be faithful to its inspirations?

O divine star, conduct me to Jesus, guide me to the stable of Bethlehem, or the cross of Calvary; lead me where thou wilt, provided I may find him who is my soul's treasure.

3rd Point. Consider—this day truly terminates our miseries, and forms the commencement of our salvation. To-day we are received into the number of the citizens of heaven and the domestics of God. By a happy transition we pass from darkness into the admirable light of God. This day, those who were afar off approach unto God; sinners are received to pardon, and a harbour of safety is open to the miserable. The Son of God, in destroying sin, has not freed us from the sufferings of this life, which are its fatal effects; but he has taken away their bitterness, and changed the penalty of sin into the means of salvation. All our woes are conse-

crated and become beatitudes, since he has assumed them in his own person. What is the felicity he reserves for us in heaven, if now he converts even the miseries of this life into a source of happiness.

O my most amiable Saviour, happy are they who seek thee with all their hearts! Happy the condition of thy faithful servants! All things contribute to the good of those who love thee. Why should I complain of the evils I suffer, since, by enduring them for thy sake, they will conduct me to eternal happiness. Henceforth grant that I may never fly poverty, abjection, or pain, since therein thou art to be found. Let all the prosperity and honours of the world be the object of my contempt, and all my happiness be placed in thy service on earth, and the enjoyment of thee in a better world.

EIGHTH OF JANUARY.

On the Co-operation of the Magi with the Divine Call.

1st POINT. Consider—in the vocation of the Magi the Eternal Father testifies his desire that all men acknowledge his divine Son as their only Saviour, presenting to him, as such, the homage of their love and adoration. He wills that "all men be saved; and come to the knowledge of the truth" (*Tim.* ii. 4); that all learn to imitate the humility, charity, and other virtues which his beloved Son practises in the crib, and which are the necessary means established for their salvation. The heart of Jesus also burns with the same desire, which causes him to say interiorly, even from the moment of his birth: "Father,.....glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." (*John*, xvii. 1.) Admire the reciprocal love of the Father and the Son, and the love of both these divine persons for men; the one cherishes them as his brethren, the other as the children

of his adoption. O infinite charity! How inconceivable, and how unmerited on our part, are the favours of God! What ingratitude, if we are not zealous for the glory of him who has so ardent a desire for our salvation.

2nd Point. Consider—the obligation on our part to correspond with the merciful designs of God, and obey the grace that calls us to his service. Had the Magi neglected the star that appeared in the east, and the interior grace that secretly impelled them to seek Jesus Christ, never would they have found or enjoyed the happiness of possessing him. "Not I, but the grace of God with me," (*Cor.* xv. 10,) is the declaration of the Apostle. Weigh the reasons why God demands our free co-operation in the affair of salvation. He requires it to fulfil the wise order of his divine Providence, which conducts all things to their end by means conformable to their nature—to ennoble and perfect our liberty, by drawing us to seek after so exalted an object, as is the salvation and sanctification of the soul, and the possession of himself; and to increase our glory, and the joy which we shall one day feel in having concurred to our own salvation, by labouring and co-operating with divine grace. Give thanks to God for the liberty with which he has endowed you for so holy an end; be confounded for having employed so noble a faculty in base unworthy things, and often contrary to salvation. O how many degrees of glory you have lost by the perversion of your free will.

3rd Point. Consider—the fidelity of the Magi in corresponding with the divine call. Of so many who beheld the star, they are alone efficaciously moved to follow the inspiration of God. Others profit not of this grace, either from want of consideration, the want of esteem for so great a blessing, or a fear of the difficulties which may beset their path. Thus, "many are called, but few chosen." (*Matt.* xx.) Consider the virtues which fidelity to grace produces in the Magi. They

are yet but novices in the faith—they have only seen a new star in the heavens, and forthwith they resolve to submit to the empire of him whom it represents. "We have seen his star, and we are come to adore him." (*Matt.* ii. 2.) The ardour of their love impels them promptly to obey the divine inspiration, without regard to the difficulties they must necessarily encounter in quitting their kingdoms, and undertaking a perilous journey to a distant land. In this they also display great courage and strength of mind, which enable them to despise all human respect and temporal considerations, in order to execute the command of God. Learn to listen with reverence to the divine inspirations, to receive them with love, and to execute them with prompt obedience; for the perfection of this virtue is diligence and fervour. Learn, also, not to be led by the example of others, but by the ordinance of God, in what regards his service and your own perfection; but consult in all things the light of faith, and the will of God, after the example of the Blessed Virgin, of whom St. Ambrose says, she was accustomed to consult God, and not men. When, O Lord, shall all nations walk "in the brightness of thy rising;" when shall all hearts follow that star of faith that has arisen upon them?

NINTH OF JANUARY.

On the Journey of the Wise Men.

1st Point. Consider—how sweetly Divine Providence provides for the Magi a guide, in the miraculous star which appeared to them in the east, and which was to them as the pillar of fire to the Israelites. With what joy they contemplate this heavenly light! with what fervour they pursue their journey under its influence! Every step is counted in heaven, and there is

not one but merits a crown, more rich than earth could give. With what holy discourse they entertain each other! how ardently they sigh after the Messiah! what patience and courage they exercise in the difficulties of the way! Happy those who imitate their example, whose conversation is of heaven, whose desires tend to God alone, who quit all to find him in whom all things centre; in fine, who live in such a manner that every affection of their hearts, every word and action of their lives, form so many steps towards a blessed eternity.

O my soul, let us go to God who is our centre; and whatever difficulty we meet, let as confide in his goodness; abandoning ourselves to his tender providence, whose care over us is so great that he employs all creatures, even the angels and stars of heaven, in our service.

2nd Point. Consider—as the Magi approach the city of Jerusalem, the star disappears by a secret order of the providence of God, who by this trial disposes them to receive a grace the most signal, which is to find Jesus and Mary. He would also oblige them to have recourse to ordinary ways, by learning of the doctors where the Messiah was to be born. Though deprived of their heavenly guide, the Magi are not discouraged, their faith and love are not abated. They fearlessly enter the city of Jerusalem, and even in the court of Herod inquire, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (*Matt.* ii. 2.) Learn from their example to bear the privation of interior light, when it occurs without cause on your part; but fear to lose it through your own fault. It often happens that we lose the presence of God in conversation with creatures, and that our good dispositions vanish. Avoid this snare; and if you perceive dissipation gliding in, promptly recall your wandering thoughts, and renew the consecration of your heart to God. The peace of the heart is a terrestrial paradise; it must be vigilantly guarded.

Beware lest envy, jealousy, ambition, flattery, or any other irregular passion, get admittance. If you feel disturbed, be assured a serpent has found entrance, and cease not to pursue until you have driven it away. Happy the soul who is not enslaved to passion or the world, but who glories in belonging to God alone; it shall enjoy an uninterrupted calm, because it serves a master who is unchangeable.

3rd Point. Consider—the Magi having learned from the doctors whom Herod had assembled, the place where, according to the prophet Micheas, the Messiah was to be born, and after having conversed in secret with the King, go forth without delay from Jerusalem, on their way to Bethlehem, which had been pointed out as the birthplace of the Saviour. No sooner did they recommence their journey, than they again beheld the star, and "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." (*Matt.* ii. 10.) They break forth into the praises of God, who had restored to them this faithful guide, which happily conducted them to the wished-for term of their journey, where they find Jesus and Mary. These should also be the object of your search and aspirations when you approach the holy communion; these you ought to seek in every action of your life; these you must necessarily find at the hour of death, or be for ever deprived of the possession of your Sovereign Good. O if you seek Jesus Christ with the faith, fervour, courage, and diligence of the Magi, you shall assuredly meet the same recompense. *Hasten by good works to redeem the time.* "Walk whilst you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you." (*John.*) "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (*Eph.* iv. 30.)

TENTH OF JANUARY.

On the Arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem.

1st Point. Consider—how great the astonishment of the Magi on entering the palace which the King of kings had chosen for his dwelling. In selecting that gloomy cavern for his abode, he teaches us that the world into which he enters is a den of sinners, who, by their idolatry and sacrilege, rob God of the glory that is his due; a receptacle of vice, which he comes to purify by his presence; in fine, a place conformable to Calvary, which discovers the uniformity between the commencement of our Redeemer's life, and its consummation on the cross. Who henceforth can form ambitious desires, seeing his king thus humbly lodged? shall nothingness believe itself to be something, seeing Omnipotence annihilated? The star rests, not over the splendid dwellings of the great ones of this world—for they are the retreats of ambition and luxury, where repose is troubled by a thousand chagrins—but over the simple hut of poverty, where tranquillity and peace of heart are to be found. Henceforth I will fly the pride and ostentation of the world, and reject with horror all it holds in esteem; while my only desire shall be to imitate the poverty and humility of my infant Saviour.

2nd Point. Consider—the manger where, as on a throne, the King of Glory reposes between two animals. The Eternal word dwelt in the bosom of his Father, where he could not be approached by men; love draws him to this lower world, where they may have free access to his divine person. He would, for this end, be born in an open stable, and laid in a manger. On this throne the Magi discover the true Solomon, and although they only behold an infant laid in a manger, nevertheless, prostrating themselves, they adore him as their

God. To the eye of faith the perfections of our divine Saviour shine forth in this mystery with peculiar splendour; his wisdom, power, and mercy have here prepared a brilliant throne. But his charity, not content with being laid between two beasts, will afterwards find, between two thieves, on the wood of the cross, a still more glorious throne. How ungrateful and insensible must the heart of man be, if he love not a God who for his sake has wrought so many prodigies, and submitted to such amazing annihilation!

O living and life-giving Bread, who hast descended from heaven to be at once the pastor and the food of man, grant that I may change the animal and terrestrial life I have hitherto led, into a life wholly spiritual and divine; to the end thou mayest accomplish in my regard the promise thou hast made, that those who eat of this heavenly bread, delivered from the penalty of death, shall live with thee in the glory of eternal bliss.

3rd Point. Consider—in the stable and the crib are found an example of the mortification of the senses which should distinguish the followers of the heavenly King. In this abode of poverty the eye meets no agreeable object whereon to rest. The smell is disgusted by the odour of this humid vault, and the sense of feeling suffers still more from the hardness of the manger and the intensity of the cold. The Saviour of the world says, he is the grain of wheat, which, being cast into the earth and dying therein, multiplies a hundred-fold; so it is in humiliation and abjection that Christian virtues increase, and bring forth abundant fruit. He that has chosen so incommodious a birthplace, will not disdain to be born in our hearts, notwithstanding all our imperfections and defects. How good is God to the pure and upright of heart, since he withdraws not his grace even from the imperfect, nor deprives them of his love, unless they forfeit it by mortal sin! Fatal evil, which gives death to the soul,

and renders it the enemy of God, I detest and renounce thee for ever. Ah! who would be so lost to reason as to contract alliance with death, and take part with hell?

O my Saviour! grant that I may fear the thought of offending thee beyond every other evil. May neither death, nor poverty, nor sufferings, nor confusion, ever separate me from thy love. May this holy love continually burn on the altar of my heart, and ever increase its ardour in thy service. I resolve, O my sovereign Good! to embrace purely for thy sake whatever suffering thou mayest ordain, and to glory in my pains and my infirmities, that thy virtue, which is charity, may dwell in me eternally.

ELEVENTH OF JANUARY.

The Adoration of the Kings.

1st Point. Consider—the star, pausing in its course over the stable of Bethlehem, descends in the atmosphere, and casts forth a more than ordinary brightness, as if to say, here you shall find the new-born king. The Magi are filled with astonishment on beholding this poor cave; but when they enter and find Jesus and Mary, there issues from the countenance of the Divine Infant and his Mother, a light more brilliant than that of the star, which, penetrating their hearts, discovers to them, in this infant, their God and their Saviour, in whom are hidden all the treasures of the Divinity. The faith of these holy men has now attained its perfection. They had made an heroic act of that virtue, when they had seen the star in the east, abandoning their country in the belief that the universal king was born. They made one still more excellent, when the star disappearing as they entered Jerusalem, they persevered with

unabated ardour in the object of their search. But the faith which they exercise on entering the stable far surpasses the former; for, beholding an infant laid in a manger, notwithstanding the appearance of poverty and weakness, they firmly believed him to be God and Lord of the universe. How penetrating is the eye of faith! To-day it discovers the majesty of God under the impotence of an infant; afterwards it will recognize him through the ignominy of the cross!

2nd Point. Consider—these words of the Evangelist: "And falling down, they adored him." (*Matt.* ii. 11.) This prostration expresses the exterior act of adoration; the interior consists in the submission of their hearts to the Divine Infant. Humble yourself, if with the Magi you desire to contemplate the wonders of God. The wise man says that the just falls seven times; but if natural weakness causes him to fall seven times, he as often prostrates himself by humility, says St. Isidore. How powerful the virtue of humility, since it is the means of attracting all the lights of heaven, and triumphing over all the enemies of salvation. Humble yourself, therefore, after the example of the Magi, if you desire, whether in prayer or holy communion, to know how good God is; but beware that your humiliation be not merely exterior—with the prostration of the body must be united the affection of the heart. If the interior spirit animate not your exterior actions, they are of little value. If it is only the lips that pray, the hand that labours, or the body that is humbled, you lose more than you gain; but even the least of our actions, if proceeding from the heart, become of inestimable value in the eyes of God.

3rd Point. Consider—the joy of the Magi is consummated on finding Jesus and Mary. Then is accomplished in their persons the desire of David: "I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear." (*Ps* xvi. 15.) The faithful of the ancient testament trembled with fear

at the sight of an angel who spoke to them on the part of God. In the law of grace, the sight of a God does not terrify the Magi; they are impressed with respect, but this profound reverence is accompanied with an inconceivable sweetness. Did I approach the divine mysteries, to participate of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, with a faith as lively, a humility as profound, what heavenly consolations would he impart, in discovering to me the splendour of his divine perfections, hidden under the species, enveloped in the accidents of bread, enclosed in the tabernacles and ciboriums, as heretofore in the grotto of Bethlehem! O wise Magi, the toils of your journey are well recompensed by the joy you experience in the presence of your sovereign good. Well may we address you in those words: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you now see," (*Luke*, x. 23,) and which see him also with the same faith, respect, humility, and love. We behold him daily on the altar, but may we not fear that this signal benefit will turn to our condemnation, for want of a corresponding disposition on our part. What confusion should I not feel, to be so cold and tepid in the presence of these august mysteries, where I see with my eyes the same divine infant whom the Magi beheld in the crib, yet testify as little respect as if I knew him not.

I bless thee, O my Saviour, and I invite all creatures to unite with me in giving thee thanks for the light of thy divine faith, imparted to us in the person of the wise men. Grant, O Lord, that, led by its beams, w may perceive the most humble amongst men are the greatest in thy sight, and that what is despicable to the world is most valuable in thy estimation.

TWELFTH OF JANUARY.

On the Offerings of the Magi.

1st Point. Consider—the Magi, after having adored the Son of God, open their treasures, and offer him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The holy Fathers say that these gifts which they draw from their treasures, denote those drawn from the treasury of their hearts, that is, the virtues exercised in this offering. What are the virtues treasured in your heart, as gifts to present to your infant Saviour? If you possess no rich present, offer at least all you have. Beseech him, if he find nothing in your soul worthy to be presented to him, that he will at least take from it whatever displeases him therein. Be not of the number of those who, instead of offering gifts to God, rob him of the glory which is his due. Saint Chrysologus says: "If you adore God without presenting him some offering, your devotion is false." This is proved by the example of the Magi, prostrate before the crib of Jesus Christ. The gold which they offer signifies their love; the frankincense, which is used in sacrifice, denotes the devotion that burns on the altar of their hearts; and the myrrh marks the spirit of mortification, and the desire they conceived of imitating the divine infant in his extreme humiliation and sufferings. Say not that the Magi were rich, and that you have nothing worthy of being offered to the Son of God. Do you not know that time is a rich treasure, to each moment of which God has attached an infinite value. Consecrate it, then, entirely to Jesus Christ, and resolve to employ it solely in his service. Thus will you present him a most agreeable offering.

2nd Point. Consider—the three gifts of the Magi mark the principal qualities they recognise and adore

in the person of Jesus Christ. The sentiment of the church is, that gold signifies his royal power, incense his dignity as sovereign pontiff, and myrrh his interment. Purpose, as the fruit of your reflection on these sentiments, to serve Jesus Christ faithfully as your God and your King; to love him ardently as your sovereign High Priest, who having once immolated himself for you on the wood of the cross, daily continues that sacrifice on the altar; and to imitate him as the victim who "was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins." (*Isaiah*, liii.) Behold with what humility, reverence, and devotion the Magi present their gifts. How ardent the zeal which animates them to bear the name of this divine Infant to the extremities of the earth, even at the expense of their lives. How fervently they desire the fulfilment of the prophecy of David: "He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. All the kings of the earth shall adore him; all nations shall serve him." (*Ps.* lxxi. 8, 11.)

3rd Point. Consider—with what looks of tender approbation the infant Jesus beholds the hearts and offerings of the holy Magi. We cannot doubt that while they presented their treasures, he bestowed on them gifts much more precious. It would not be suitable to the magnificence of the Creator to be less generous than his creatures. For their gold, he endows them with an admirable wisdom, to understand the most exalted mysteries of religion, and to impart to others this divine science. For their incense, he confers the gift of piety, which inspires them with a contempt of all worldly greatness, and entire devotedness to the service of God. For their myrrh, he infuses into their souls a sublime spirit of the cross, and of continual mortification. We may believe that the Blessed Virgin, in presenting the Divine Infant to their embraces, was the organ through which they were replenished with

the raptures and consolations of heaven. How favourable is God to those who seek him, how sweet to those who find him, how munificent to those who give themselves to him without reserve! Guilty and ungrateful as you are, do you imagine that the Mother of Mercy, who is also come to seek sinners, will withhold that divine Son from your embrace, if you be persevering in seeking, and generous in devoting all to him?

OCTAVE OF THE EPIPHANY.

On the Return of the Magi.

1st Point. Consider—with what sentiments of devotion and love the Magi take leave of Jesus and Mary, and prepare to return into their own country. After rendering homage to the divine Infant, they remain some time at his sacred feet, watering them with their tears. With what heavenly consolation was their hearts filled in speaking to their Infant Saviour; how ardent their thanksgiving for having been called by the miraculous star, and so favourably received in his divine presence; in fine, how devoted their protestations of eternal fidelity, esteeming it more glorious to be his vassals than the monarchs of the world. Who can express the holy discourse which they hold with the blessed Virgin, the sweetness with which she discovers to them the hidden greatness of her Son, and instructs them in the manner they should live on returning to their own country, conforming themselves in all things to the maxims of the faith they had received. How happy these holy Magi in finding so favourable an entrance into the hearts of Jesus and Mary! How happy in becoming the disciples of the one and the other! Willingly would they pass the remainder of their lives with the Son and Mother, if the same spirit which had

led them to the crib, had not inspired them to withdraw and return back to their homes. Happy they who come from prayer and holy communion with the devotion of the sages, who listen to the divine instructions of the Eternal Wisdom, with an ardent desire to fulfil them; who remain at the feet of Jesus and Mary as their beloved retreat, and who only go thence for their service, and under the guidance of the Divine Spirit. How far removed am I from these sentiments! To me the time of prayer and communion seems tedious; I approach with coldness, I withdraw hastily, I remain without respect, affection, or profit.

2nd Point. Consider—the care of Divine Providence over the Magi. They are warned in sleep not to return to Herod, but to take another road back into their own country. Thus the heart of Jesus watches over you during sleep, and, provided you seek and serve him generously, he will protect you from every unforeseen danger that may menace. We have unhappily strayed by sin from heaven, which is our true country. We have departed by the road of worldly pleasure, according to St. Gregory; we must return by that of tears and penance. Had the Magi sought Jesus Christ as a terrestrial king, they would have remained near his person; but because it is the King of Heaven they seek, and the pure performance of his will, they are satisfied with accomplishing that for which they are called, and then return without delay. They sacrifice to God the inexpressible happiness of remaining in the presence of their divine Master, in order to fulfil their obligations and the duties of their charge. Follow their example, not that of St. Peter, who desired to remain for ever on Thabor, lest you merit the same reproach which Timothy of Antioch made to him: "Peter, art thou so engrossed with thy own happiness, as to forget the conversion of the world to which thou art destined?" Whatever devotion you feel in spiritual exercises, is

but an illusion, if inordinate attachment to them cause you to neglect the duties of your charge.

3rd Point. Consider—the admirable zeal displayed by the Magi when arrived in their own kingdoms. They publish aloud the birth of the great king; they relate how the star had guided and pointed out to them the place of his dwelling; how they had seen the Divine Infant, and had found him laid in a manger. It is supposed that they renounced their riches, to embrace the voluntary poverty they admired in Jesus Christ. Reflect on the progress in perfection made by these great saints in consequence of their faithful correspondence with the first grace of vocation. Animated by the zeal they had imbibed at the sacred feet of Jesus Christ, they persevered in their holy practices, labouring indefatigably for the conversion of their people, with a fervour that was at last crowned with a glorious martyrdom. What use do you make of so many examples, and so many sweet and powerful attractions to virtue? Do you not retrograde instead of advance in perfection? What tepidity and infidelity through the whole course of your life! When will you give yourself to God alone? When life is about to terminate, will there be time to begin?

FOURTEENTH OF JANUARY.

On the Journey of the Blessed Virgin to Jerusalem.

1st Point. Consider—how forty days after the birth of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin leaves Bethlehem, bearing the Divine Infant in her arms, to comply with the law of purification and presentation of the first-born. With what sentiments of humility, obedience, resignation, gratitude, and love, does she offer this action to God, in commencing her journey! We should never go forth

but with Jesus, and led by his spirit, that is to say, by motives of obedience and charity, uniting our intentions and actions with his, invoking his aid, and placing ourselves under his protection, that thus we may avoid the defects incident to human society, and draw fruit from our conversation with men. The Mother of God was not included in the law made for ordinary women; she was singular among mothers; nevertheless she ranks herself with the other daughters of Eve, to teach us that it is a glorious virtue to show no singularity, and to conceal under ordinary observances an extraordinary merit. She neither anticipates nor defers a single moment the time prescribed by the law. How does this example condemn the facility with which we seek dispensations? Let us renounce this pusillanimity, disabuse ourselves of these false opinions which lead us to solicit exemptions and affect privileges, as marks of superiority. Let us place our strength and our glory in observing the rules and ordinances of justice. The wicked have no other law than their power and strength. The servants of God say, on the contrary: Let the law of justice be our strength; for that which is unjust must be pernicious.

2nd Point. Consider—the Blessed Virgin advancing towards Jerusalem, bearing the Divine Infant in her bosom, her eyes fixed on the divine object to which her heart is inseparably united. Follow them in spirit, and contemplate Jesus in the arms of this blessed Mother as the living source of purity, that is one day to wash away the sins of the world in his blood; as a flaming torch scattering the fire of love with which this angelic woman goes to seek the lost drachma, that is to say, the salvation of our souls; in fine, as a treasure which shall afterwards pay the ransom of all men. All the days of our lives are days of purification, which shall not be accomplished until the moment of death. No one can enter the heavenly Jerusalem, unless he be

purified from every stain. Hasten, therefore, to cleanse them in the fountain of life, that you may not be condemned to the expiatory fire. Remember you are a pilgrim upon earth, and the Son of God is the torch that enlightens you amid the darkness of the world. Walk whilst you have the light, advance in the pursuit of virtue, lest death surprise and compass you with its shadow, before you arrive at that degree of sanctity demanded of you by Almighty God. Jesus is the treasure you are to possess in eternity: let your heart desire and love but him alone. What will it avail you to gain the whole world, if, by losing him, you incur a miserable eternity.

3rd Point. Consider—the arrival of the Blessed Virgin in Jerusalem. With what joy she beholds, and how fervently she ascends the steps of the temple. How profound the respect and devotion with which she enters and prepares to offer her sacrifice. Never had so many prodigies met in this magnificent temple; never had God been so honoured therein. Men eminently noble and virtuous had entered it, but never before a God-man. Virgins and mothers had presented themselves, but not a Virgin-Mother. God had there received the homage of angels and men, but not that of an adoring God. Victims had been offered, but not the victim that effaces the sins of the world. Did you go to prayer, communion, and mass, with the same sentiments as the Blessed Virgin entered the temple, with what heavenly benedictions would you be replenished! In approaching to participate in the divine mysteries, you should say with the royal Prophet: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord." (*Ps.* cxxi.) What should be your reverence on entering the church, when you remember you are at the gate of heaven, in the company of angels, and in the presence of God himself, who beholds the inmost recesses of your soul.

How dare I appear before thee, O my God, covered as I am with the leprosy of sin, did not thy mercy sustain my hope, and encourage me to expose to thee my miseries? "Wash me yet more and more from my iniquities; and cleanse me from my sins." (*Ps.* l. 4.) O Blessed Virgin! purest of all creatures, may thy obedience be my example; and may the blood of thy divine Son be a sacred laver to cleanse me from every stain of sin.

FIFTEENTH OF JANUARY.

On the Purification of the Blessed Virgin.

1st Point. Consider—the obedience and love the Blessed Virgin exercises in submitting to the legal ceremony of purification. It is not the obligation of the law, but love, that impels her to this action; nevertheless, she as strictly observes all the circumstances as if obliged thereto. During forty days, in compliance with the law, she denies herself the consolation of entering the temple. Being arrived in Jerusalem, she waits with the other women at the gate of the temple; she who was the sanctuary of the Divinity; she offers a sacrifice of purification, though more pure than the rays of the sun; she prostrates before the priest, who receives her offering with the accustomed prayers and ceremonies. She complies with this legal observance to honour the sanctity of God, in comparison of whom the holiness of creatures is but as a shadow; to imitate the voluntary obedience of her Divine Son to the law of circumcision for your example, and to teach you that there is no honour or glory equal to that of submitting to the law of God. If you believe this, whence comes the false shame you feel in the discharge of your duties? Whence such difficulty in obeying those whom

God has placed over you? Why, on being constrained to execute their orders, or observe your rules, do you comply without exactitude, fervour, or fidelity?

2nd Point. Consider—the humility and love of holy poverty practised by the Blessed Virgin in this mystery. Her profound humility makes her desirous to pass for a weak and sinful creature, who needs this legal purification, notwithstanding her supereminent sanctity, and the favour she enjoys with God, who grants us no grace but through her mediation. From a love of holy poverty she presents the offerings of the poor, a pair of turtle doves or pigeons, although she could have purchased a lamb, the usual offering of the rich, had she availed herself of the gifts of the Magi; but she preferred bestowing those in alms, being content with the treasure God had confided to her care, in giving her his Divine Son, the true model of evangelical poverty and humility. Love these two virtues, if you love Jesus and Mary, and if you desire to be loved by them. Be poor in inclination and in spirit, that you may possess the heavenly treasure. Be humble amongst men, that you may be great amongst the saints.

3rd Point. Consider—the piety and modesty with which this purest and holiest of creatures presents her offering. It is recorded that holy Simeon recognised the Mother of God, by a veil which distinguished her from the other women, and this veil was no other than her singular modesty; for he judged that a modesty so amiable, and at the same time so profound, like the veiled countenance of the Seraphim in the act of adoration, belonged only to that Virgin, who, according to the Prophet, would conceive and bring forth the Messiah. It is also believed that he beheld a heavenly light surround the Infant and his Mother; this visible light was an exterior sign of the interior piety and sanctity that animated their sacrifice, and rendered it a spectacle worthy of angels and of the God of angels. Thus

should you comport yourself before God and men, regulating your interior and exterior in so holy a manner that your piety may render you pleasing in the eyes of God, and your modesty diffuse edification among men.

O Holy Virgin! while the contemplation of thy virtues fills me with admiration, I am confounded in considering the irregularity of my life, so opposed to the example thou hast given. When shall I correspond with the merciful designs of God? Alas! I know that which he demands of me; but I do not accomplish that which I know. I ought to appear in all my actions as one of thy children, but I am unworthy to bear that name. I am not worthy to be called thy child; but O my sovereign Mistress, receive me into the number of thy servants, and suffer me under that title to dwell in thy holy house.

SIXTEENTH OF JANUARY.

On the Blessed Virgin presenting her Divine Son in the Temple.

1st Point. Consider—the justice of the law which obliged the Jews to offer their first-born to God, in acknowledgment of the benefit received when the exterminating angel slew the first-born of the Egyptians. What more just than to acknowledge the favours of God, to offer him whatever we hold most precious, as a homage of thanksgiving, and to revere as holy whatever has been consecrated to his service? How many reasons oblige you to holiness of life, and an entire consecration to God, to whom you belong by so many titles! He has created you to his own image, to praise him here, and reign with him for eternity. He has redeemed you with his precious blood, that you might serve him in holiness and justice, walking

in his presence all the days of your life. He has called you to the faith, to religion, or to an apostolic life, that you might sanctify yourself, and labour for the sanctification of others. He has nourished you with the bread of angels, placed you in his holy house, instructed and enlightened by his holy inspirations, and admitted you to the society of saints. Whence is it, that consecrated as you are to God, you advance so little in virtue? Whence, that he whom I have so dearly loved has wrought so little good, and so much evil in my house? When will you be worthy of your high vocation? Defer not a single moment to give yourself to God without reserve. Be you holy, because he is holy. Let your every act be generous, heroic, worthy of the God you serve; in fine, make him an unreserved oblation of that which alone he demands, in return for all his benefits, saying, "Son, give me thy heart."

2nd Point. Consider—the perfection with which the Blessed Virgin fulfils the law, in presenting her only beloved Son to the Lord. The offering presented is a God-man, the compendium of all miracles, the source of every grace, the treasure of all the wisdom of the creator, the first-born of the living, the object of the complaisance and love of the Eternal Father. This offering is presented by Mary, the most exalted, the most devoted, and most beloved of creatures. Jesus also offers himself to his Eternal Father, to lead a most painful life, and undergo a cruel and ignominious death. This oblation is made to render homage to God, as the first principle of all beings; to acknowledge his sovereign bounty, the source of all good; to satisfy his justice for the sins of the world, and to obtain from his liberality all graces necessary for the salvation of mankind. Give thanks to the Son of God, who offers himself not only for the salvation of the world, but for yours in particular. Oh! could you enter into the hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; could you discover

the holy affection they then entertained for you, with what fervour would you offer yourself for all that regards their honour and service! Remember, you shall one day be arraigned before Jesus as your Judge; endeavour to prevent that awful moment, by presenting yourself to him now as your Saviour, and rendering yourself worthy to be received by him with all that benignity which he manifests towards his faithful servants.

3rd Point. Consider—the Blessed Virgin ransoms her Divine Son with five sickles, the price ordained by the law for all the first-born. Admire the humility of the Son and the Mother, which redeems the Divine Infant at the price common to the lowliest of the sons of men. What gratitude do you owe to the Eternal Father, who is not only content with that which you can offer for his Son, but also gratuitously, and without any merit on your part, furnishes the price he demands? Should you not purchase such a treasure, even at the expense of your life? Nevertheless, you complain of the restraint necessary for subjecting your senses, which are the five sickles he requires; or for practising the five acts of virtue, which, according to the doctrine of the church, concur to a perfect conversion: these are, faith, the fear of God, confidence in his mercy, contrition, and perfect submission to the divine law. The Blessed Virgin ransoms her Divine Son, that he may redeem you by the five wounds he will suffer on the cross. Give thanks to this good Mother, who here performs the office of mediatrix with so much charity. Spare no effort to preserve in your heart the amiable presence and sweet conversation of Jesus. Be confounded in considering how base the objects for which you relinquish his love. Devote yourself wholly to him who gives himself to you without reserve. You belong not to yourself, but to Jesus Christ, who for your sake delivered himself to the death of the cross.

SEVENTEENTH OF JANUARY.

On Holy Simeon entering the Temple.

1st Point. Consider—the happiness of this holy old man, who was chosen by God to manifest the birth of the Messiah, and the promise of the Holy Spirit, who had assured him he should not die until he had beheld the Saviour of the world. It is asserted that he received this revelation whilst meditating on the prophecy of Isaiah, which predicts that a virgin shall bring forth a son; and that asking of God the solution of this mystery, the Holy Ghost revealed to him that he should behold it before he died. Your rules and the commandments of God are so many oracles which assure you that you shall not die if you observe them: for our Lord hath said, "Do this and thou shalt live." (*Luke*, x. 28.) Fear God and keep his commandments: for in this consists the happiness and glory of man. Oh! were you careful to observe your rules, how calmly would you look on your temporal death, and how little would you fear that which is eternal. Learn to rely on the promises of God, and the care he takes to glorify his Son and manifest his grandeur amidst the most profound humiliation. Leave to him the care of your honour, he will preserve it so far as he shall judge necessary for his glory and your own good. The world promises much, and gives no real happiness; on the contrary, the benefits of God always exceed those which he promises. Holy Simeon not only beheld the Messiah, but received him into his arms, and offered him to God in the temple with an overflowing of heavenly consolation. Why are you not as faithful to the resolutions you make in the presence of God, as he is munificent in accomplishing all that he promises?

2nd Point. Consider—the virtues by which the Holy Ghost disposed Simeon to behold the Messiah, and publish his greatness. He was just, acquitting himself faithfully of all his duties towards God and man. He feared God. The commencement of virtue is holy fear and reverence for the divine majesty. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (*Ps.* cx. 10) He lived in expectation and desire of beholding the Lord, the consolation of Israel. He had persevered to an old age in this expectation. Therefore it is said the Holy Ghost dwelt in him. Learn from the example of this prophet, to prepare yourself, by the exercise of these virtues, for the visits of our Lord, particularly when he shall come to you at the hour of death. Be you also just, rendering to every one that which is his due. Fear God; shun the least faults; endeavour to walk worthily in the divine presence. Live in expectation and desire of being united with Jesus Christ in heaven. Seek not the consolations of this world—they are transitory, base, and dangerous. Await those of heaven, with perfect resignation to the will of God, and an unshaken constancy in his service. "Expect the Lord, do manfully," in whatever place or employment you may be; whether with many or few consolations, "let thy heart take courage, and wait the Lord." (*Ps.* xxvi. 14.) Be faithful unto death, relying on the hope that you shall "see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living."

3rd Point. Consider—the spirit that leads holy Simeon to the temple: it is a spirit of prophecy, which discovers to him that the Messiah at that same hour had entered the temple; a spirit of devotion and fervour that presses him to repair thither; a spirit of love that replenishes him with joy, while he holds in his arms the long-expected Saviour. Reflect on the sentiments and affections which animated him when possessed of this rich treasure—what passed between his

heart and that of the infant Jesus, thus closely united to each other. With what disposition do you present yourself before God in prayer? How do you comport yourself during your spiritual duties? In what spirit do you enter the church, and approach to receive the holy communion? Is it with fervour, reverence, and application of mind? Beware of appearing there only in body, for instead of appeasing God, you would thereby draw upon yourself his wrath. Is not this the cause that you receive the precious body of Christ with so little fruit and consolation? Apply an efficacious remedy to this disorder; form the resolution of following the guidance and obeying the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Ah! if you put no obstacle to the operation of the spirit of Jesus, you would taste those delights which fervent souls find in him; you would receive light to discover his admirable perfections, and those treasures of grace whence you may draw all the virtues you stand in need of. In fine, you would enjoy in this life a foretaste of paradise, and a precious pledge of eternal happiness. "Send forth thy light and thy truth: they have conducted me, and brought me unto thy holy hill, and into thy tabernacles." (*Ps.* xlii. 3.)

EIGHTEENTH OF JANUARY.

On the Canticle of Simeon.

1st Point. Consider—this holy and venerable old man, holding in his arms the Son of God, illuminated by the Holy Ghost, penetrates the hidden greatness of this infant. Admiration, joy, and love divide his heart; and amidst these ecstatic affections he blesses God in a short but admirable canticle, which comprehends three qualities discernible in the Saviour: that he is the salvation of the world, the light of nations, and the glory

of Israel. The first demonstrates that he is the Saviour both of Jew and Gentile; the second, that he saves infidel nations, imparting to them the light of faith; the third, that he saves the faithful, replenishing them with grace and glory. Jesus Christ is the true light of our souls; therefore the church, on the festival of the Purification, dispenses to her children tapers blessed and lighted, emblematic of the interior light of faith and the fire of charity which the Son of God came to enkindle on earth. The flame is the type of his Divinity, which is the eternal and increated light. The taper consumes itself in enlightening us; thus the Son of God employed his whole life, and gave the last drop of his blood for our salvation. The flame of the taper is nourished by the wax, and the wax derives all its brilliancy from the flame: so the fire of charity must be united with purity; and this virtue must be animated by the fire of charity, in order to possess either lustre or merit in the eyes of God.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ is the glory of Israel, because all the wonders which God had wrought to aggrandize that nation regarded only this dear Son, in consideration of whom he conferred innumerable favours and benedictions on the Israelites. Jesus Christ is the glory of God, of angels, and men; the glory and ornament of the universe, out of whom there is no true honour. Those who withdraw from his obedience, whatever reputation they possess with men, shall one day appear as vile in their eyes as at present they are in those of God. In vain does the sinner glory in his power and riches; in the service of Jesus Christ alone true glory consists. The honour of a Christian is to know God, and Jesus Christ his only Son; to preserve a pure conscience; to gain many souls to Jesus Christ; in fine, to suffer for his love, and to bear the cross here below, that he may one day receive a crown of glory in heaven.

O God, who art the glory of Israel, thou dwellest in the holy place, and iniquity is always displeasing to thee. Therefore the just who hope in thee shall rejoice; those who love thy name shall glory in thee, because thou wilt bless the just. Thou hast covered us with thy love as with a buckler. O Lord, thou art my protector, thou art my glory; from thee I have received all that I am.

3rd POINT. Consider—Jesus Christ is the salvation of the world; his Father has sent him to be the light of nations, and the universal cause of the salvation of man, even to the ends of the earth: "I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth." (*Isaiah*, xlix. 6.) Meditate the words of holy Simeon: "My eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people." (*Luke*, ii. 30, 31.) This divine Saviour is before you. He presents himself to your eyes. His light surrounds you; he offers himself to be your salvation. It is in your own power to become a great saint; for on his part he desires, he can and will effect it if you place no obstacle thereto.

O my Glory, my Light, the Author of my salvation! what shall I say at the hour of death, if I am found destitute of virtue and devoid of thy grace? When thou wilt demand why I have not gained my salvation, what excuse shall I offer, or what shall I reply to thy reproaches, but that I willed it not. "O Lord, the God of my salvation; I have cried in the day, and in the night before thee. Let my prayer come in before thee; incline thy ear to my petition. For my soul is filled with evils; and my life hath been nigh to hell." (*Ps.* lxxxvii.) "Save me, O God, for the waters have come in even unto my soul; I stick fast in the mire of the deep, and there is no sure standing." (*Ps.* lxviii. 2, 3) Draw me forth from my misery, and suffer not that I lose the fruit of my redemption, which has cost thee so dear

NINETEENTH OF JANUARY.

On the Flight of Jesus Christ into Egypt.

1st Point. Consider—the flight of Jesus Christ is not an effect of fear, it is a mystery of wisdom. The Son of God, for your example, flies the world, and you seek it! He seeks you by an excessive mercy, and you fly from him by an excess of ingratitude. You renounce Jesus Christ with the world, rather than renounce the world with Jesus Christ. Form now a firm resolution to seek Jesus Christ in all things, and with him to flee the world. Flee it when it flatters, when it tempts, when it persecutes. Beware of following its laws, which are quite opposed to the maxims of the gospel; do not permit yourself to be corrupted by its evil example; seek not occasions (which occur but too often unsought) that would engage you to sin, and lead to the ruin of your soul. Your duty is to fly, or to combat if you cannot avoid them; if you approach danger under a vain assurance of victory, you shall perish therein. "Whoever draws nigh to danger, shall not long be secure; his ruin is inevitable, if he does not speedily withdraw," says St. Jerome. If it is objected that this is not to combat but to retreat, reply with this holy doctor: "I know my own weakness; I will not hazard the combat on the presumption of vanquishing, lest I should lose the victory." What should oblige me to quit the certain for the uncertain? You who encounter the enemy may gain the victory, but you are also in danger of being overcome: as for me, I fly the combat as my only security against being vanquished. It is an act of folly to remain in danger when we have it in our power to escape it by flight.

2nd Point. Consider—the flight of Jesus Christ is not a mark of human frailty, but of divine power. If he is omnipotent, why does he yield to the pride of

Herod, whom he could instantly have annihilated? Why does he permit this early persecution? and why does he use such feeble means of defence? To teach us how to yield to our neighbour with charity and modesty, giving no person offence, neither resenting nor retaliating injuries, for it is better to suffer all things than to lose meekness and peace of mind. Admire the dispensation of the Eternal Father towards his divine Son, in exposing him to the sufferings of a tedious exile; meditate also the admirable submission and obedience which the Son renders to his Father. How willingly he sacrifices to God his Father his judgment, will, and all the powers of his soul, and abandons himself unreservedly to the guidance of St. Joseph. Is it thus you submit to the commands given you on the part of God? Are you content that he disposes of you absolutely, and without regard to your inclinations? Would you have him yield to your desires, rather than resign yourself to his holy will? "Wilt thou make void my judgment, and condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?" (*Job*, xl. 3.) Examine the words of the angel to St. Joseph. They inspire a most filial confidence: "Take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee." (*Matt.* ii. 13.) It is an angel who speaks on the part of God. Why should we be anxious, since the angels of God are charged with all that regards us? He addresses himself to St. Joseph as guardian to the Son and his blessed Mother, teaching us to behold God in our superiors, and to live tranquilly under the special providence of him who governs us through their ministry. He says only: "Take the child and his mother," for nothing can be wanting to him who possesses Jesus and Mary. O my Saviour, what can I desire beside thee, and without thee what can satisfy my heart? Grant me thy grace and thy love, and I desire nothing more.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ flies not to avoid

death, but in order to give us life. Why should he fly death, since he entered the world but to die? He came on earth to teach us the way to heaven, to dissipate the darkness of idolatry, and to trace in his life a perfect model of every virtue: this he would not have accomplished, had he submitted to death in his infancy. He came to re-establish man in the state of grace from which he has fallen. He would die in the mature age in which Adam had been created, "in order to repair human nature in the perfect age in which man had been created, and to restore him to heaven such as he had given him to earth," says St. Chrysologus. Therefore he does not fly death, he only defers it; he yields not to Herod by constraint, but by design; his death must be the effect of his love, not of the violence of his persecutors. If he dies, it will not be by necessity, but by election; as St. Fulgentius says, "it is his own goodness, not the malice of others, that will deprive him of life. His death will not be the result of compulsion, but of his own free will." The blood of his infant veins is not sufficient to satisfy his desire of saving us, and glorifying God. The stream thereof must swell for thirty-three years, that he may pour it forth more abundantly for our redemption. Reflect here on the words of St. Augustin: that Jesus Christ is born in us by faith, animated by charity. We must cause him to increase, and suffer him not to die within us. When virtue is yet weak, Satan uses all his efforts to stifle it; we must oppose his pernicious designs, and employ all our care to preserve the life of Jesus in our souls. This we shall do by removing ourselves from peril; because he that looks upon danger with complacency or presumption, is almost as culpable as he that engages himself therein.

O true light of my soul, my strength, and my salvation, reveal to me the secret of my own weakness and corruption; and grant that I may every day so increase

in the mysterious knowledge of self, as to be induced utterly to distrust myself, and to place all my confidence in thee—carefully flying every voluntary occasion of offending thee, but humbly relying on thy gracious providence when duty calls for my services or exertions.

TWENTIETH OF JANUARY.

On the Journey of Jesus Christ into Egypt.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus Christ willingly submits to exile, with all its inconveniences and painful consequences, to teach us detachment from the natural affection we bear to our relatives, friends, and the place of our birth; willingly to quit all that is most dear, when such is required for the service of God, or to fulfil the orders of his divine providence. "He who loves his country," says Hugh of St. Victor, "is yet weak in virtue; he who considers the whole world as his own country, is already strong and generous. But he is perfect to whom all the world is an exile. The first is attached to the world; the second is disengaged from it; the third has extinguished all earthly affections in his heart." In which class do you rank? Do you feel equally disposed for whatever place obedience shall appoint? Have you no tie to the earth? Do you only sigh after heaven, which is your true country, and that of the saints? Accustom yourself to consider God everywhere; and you will feel indifferent to all places St. Augustin assures us that in vain do they endeavour to banish a man who lives according to the spirit of Christianity; because, either the whole world is his country, or it is his exile. "Do you seek a land of exile for a Christian, first find a place where Jesus Christ is not. Can you banish a man who belongs to all countries in Jesus Christ, and who is everywhere a stranger according to the flesh?"

2nd Point. Consider—the journey of these three holy pilgrims: accompany them in spirit, and endeavour to render them all due honour and service. Compassionate the fatigue of the tender Infant, of his blessed Mother, and of St. Joseph, who conducts them through the dreary desert, where the Israelites sojourned forty years before they entered the promised land. To what privations and difficulties were they not exposed in passing through the frightful solitude of the wilderness? Admire their patience, humility, and meekness. With what unbounded confidence did they repose, in all their sufferings, on the paternal providence that extends to the birds of the air, and the humblest flower of the field, and which cannot forget those so much more beloved. The will of the eternal Father, and the visible presence of Jesus Christ, is to the Mother of this Divine Infant, and to his holy guardian, a living source of joy, that changes the desert into a paradise of delights. "To be without Jesus is a grievous hell, and to be with Jesus a sweet paradise. When Jesus is present all goes well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent everything is hard." (*Imitat.* b. ii. 8, b. iii. 21.)

O Jesus, the brightness of eternal glory, the comfort of a soul in its pilgrimage; my tongue cannot express the sentiments of my heart; but my silence itself speaks to thee. "How long doth my Lord delay to come. Let him come to me, his poor servant, and make me joyful; let him stretch forth his hand, and deliver me, a wretch, from all anguish. Come, for without thee I can never have one joyful day or hour, for thou art my joy; and without thee my table is empty."

3rd Point. Consider—why has the Son of God chosen Egypt for the place of his retreat? "Listen," says St. Augustin, "to a great secret of providence. Moses had heretofore deprived these infidels of the light of day. Jesus Christ comes to restore it, and dissipate their darkness." Moses had stricken Egypt with ten

fatal wounds: Jesus Christ comes to heal them by a single remedy. Moses had delivered the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, to lead them into the promised land: Jesus Christ comes to free his elect from the captivity of the demon, and conduct them to their heavenly country. In fine, Moses had overwhelmed the Egyptians in the Red Sea: Jesus Christ comes to wash their crimes in his precious blood; and of the most superstitious of nations, to make them the most faithful and holy. "O change of the right hand of the Most High," says St. Chrysologus. This people which had been the persecutor of Israel, the cherished first-born of God, becomes the protector of his only Son. At the entrance of the Son of God into Egypt, all the idols fell to the ground, as the prophet Isaiah had predicted in these words: "Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence." (*Isaiah*, xix. 1.)

O Divine Saviour, who hast banished idolatry from the land of Egypt, when wilt thou destroy the irregular affections that are adored on the altar of my heart? Come, Lord, break these idols; prostrate them to the earth, that thou mayest re-establish the empire of thy love. Holy Virgin, who didst bear this divine Infant into a foreign land, to sanctify it by his presence, hasten to visit us, and bear him into our hearts, that they may be re-modelled according to his most holy heart, and that he may reign in them for eternity.

TWENTY-FIRST OF JANUARY.

On the sojourn of Jesus in Egypt.

1st Point. Consider—the extreme poverty in which Mary and Joseph, with the Divine Infant, lived during their residence in Egypt. They subsisted only by the

labour of their hands, and received from an infidel and barbarous people, who had little humanity, rather cause of suffering than assistance in their necessities: but they received all equally from the hand of God; and as a devout author (Henry Morns) observes, "obedience was to them instead of riches, patience instead of temporal convenience, piety instead of consolation; having the will of God always present to their minds," in which they considered all their sufferings as in their first cause; whence they drew, as well as from the inestimable treasure they possessed, an incredible sweetness, which solaced all their pains. "Fear not, my son: we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good." (*Tobias*, iv. 23.) "The only poverty that can injure, and that you should fear, is to be poor in merit." (*St. Bernard.*) Want, hunger, labour, and the other privations of life are the sources of virtue, and the cradle of the servants of Jesus Christ, who was accompanied by them from the moment of his birth, to his last sigh on the cross. If you desire to follow him, you must not fly them, since they are his inseparable companions. Do you desire to be perfect? St. Jerome says, "If you have wealth, give to the poor; if you have not, you are delivered from a great burden. Follow Jesus Christ, naked like himself. This is hard, it is high and difficult; but the recompense is great."

2nd Point. Consider—the profound humility exercised by Jesus Christ in his exile. Why does he remain so long in obscurity, without other occupation than that of a mere artizan? It is to teach you contempt of the world, and perfect indifference with regard to whatever place or employment Providence may ordain. Self-love is grieved to remain inactive, in contempt or oblivion, whilst others enjoy honour and reputation. It complains that its talents are useless, that others of inferior merit are preferred; in a word, that it is forgotten as one

buried in the tomb, or as a useless vessel. "I am forgotten as one dead from the heart. I am become as a vessel that is destroyed." (*Ps.* xxx. 13.) Let your reply be—thus has the Eternal Father treated his well-beloved Son, and I am too much honoured in wearing his livery. If the apprehension of humiliation and confusion terrify you, say with St. Paul: "My life, my reputation, my honour, contentment, are not more precious than my duty. I am satisfied, provided I finish my course, and accomplish the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus Christ." Leave to the world its riches, honours, and all that can serve as fuel to concupiscence, and purchase Christian liberty by that blessed commerce which renders the children of God rich in their poverty, strong in their patience, and illustrious in their humility. What can be more sublime than those great souls, who elevate themselves by holy desires, above all that is temporal, and aspire only to the love of the Creator; whom to approach, is to be ennobled; whom to fear, is to be replete with joy; and whom to serve, is to reign.

3rd Point. Consider—the zeal that glows in the heart of this Divine Infant, and how he is occupied in his solitude for the salvation of men and the glory of God. He compassionates the blindness of those infidels, and deplores the loss of so many souls, whom the spirit of darkness holds captive, seducing them by his artifices into every crime. The honour which those idolaters render to their false deities, and the multitude of temples erected to their idols, increase the sorrow of the Son of God. It conceives an ardent desire to remedy all those disorders. He offers himself to his Father as a victim, to expiate the sins of the world; and if he defers the effusion of his blood, he already sheds abundant tears, which fall from his eyes as a heavenly dew to produce in their season the flowers and fruits of every virtue. "In that day there shall be an altar of the

Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt. And the Lord shall be known by Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall worship him with sacrifices and offerings: and they shall make vows to the Lord, and perform them." (*Isaiah*, xix. 19, 21.) Then Egypt shall appear as a heavenly city, peopled with innumerable martyrs, confessors, and virgins, leading a divine life, and performing on earth the functions of angels.

O Divine Infant, generously hast thou requited the trifling services rendered to thee by this people! Come, Lord, and lodge in my heart; sanctify it by thy amiable presence, and make it fertile in good works, good thoughts and desires. O Blessed Virgin, this heart is thy conquest, vouchsafe to take possession of it in the name of thy beloved Son, and obtain that his love may burn unceasingly therein.

TWENTY-SECOND OF JANUARY.

On the Massacre of the Innocents.

1st Point. Consider—in the person of Herod the evil consequences of unsubdued passion. He falsely imagines that the infant whom he seeks to destroy, comes to despoil him of his crown, whereas he is come into the world only to give us his heavenly kingdom. How short-sighted are the wise ones of the world! how late they discover their error! "He that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them." (*Ps.* iv. 4.) His passion is as cruel as it is blind, for one child that causes him to tremble, urges him to destroy about fourteen thousand, among whom is his own son. In fine, he has no sooner conceived the suspicion that troubles him, than without other counsel but his ambition and fury, he resolves on, and

executes the destruction of the innocents. Such is the effect of one ungoverned passion. Often a false imagination is sufficient to lead it to the greatest extremities Beware lest this monster gain an empire over your heart; it will destroy all the good you can perform, corrupt all your actions, deprive your soul of peace, and cause incalculable disorder in your whole conduct. How important to study the interior of the heart, and to gain an ascendancy over our passions. Crush them in the moment of their rising; have recourse to prayer, and form no resolution until you are restored to your wonted calm of heart. All is lost if we act under the influence of passion: the soul that abandons herself thereto, no longer fears either God or man, the enormity of sin, or the chastisement it entails.

2nd Point. Consider—in the persons of the innocent victims immolated to the ambition of Herod, a wonderful secret of Divine Providence, which permits that the persecution of creatures is often more useful to us than their false caresses. The cruelty of the tyrant, in depriving them of life, has made them instrumental in publishing the birth of Jesus Christ to the whole world; and placed on their heads the crown of martyrdom, since the Church honours them as the first fruits of her martyrs They die for Jesus Christ, and in his place, says the author of "The Cardinal Works." They confess his name, says St. Chrysologus, before they have learned to speak; they glorify before they know him; they pay him the tribute of their lives before they are perfectly conscious of the enjoyment; they attain the glory of martyrdom before they have learned to combat, and bear away the crown of victory from the enemy they have not seen. This, says St. Leo, is an effect of the omnipotence of Jesus, each moment of whose life is marked by miracles. He displays the power of his word, before his infant tongue can articulate; and already he seems to say: "Suffer the little children to

come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." (*Mark*, x. 14.) He crowns them with a new glory, and he consecrates the commencement of their life by the first moments of his own, to teach us that no one is incapable of the divine favours, since even so early an age can acquire the glory of martyrdom. Fear not to suffer in his service, and be not surprised if he permits the innocent to be persecuted. It is for his own greater glory, for their greater good it is to give an example to timid souls, and to animate the weak to the practice of virtue.

O Lord! what can I fear if I am faithful in thy service? No evil can happen to him who has the honour of serving thee.

3rd Point. Consider—the sorrow with which Jesus Christ is penetrated at the death of these innocent victims—a sorrow the more sensible, as it is on his account they are thus cruelly persecuted. His heart endures a martyrdom in each of their persons. Learn from his example to deplore the spiritual death of those who, having long preserved their baptismal grace, fall unhappily into sin. Reflect on the ungrateful reception the Son of God meets at his entrance into the world. He comes to obtain salvation for men; nevertheless, scarcely is he born, than they begin to persecute him unto death. O wonderful dispensation of the wisdom of God! Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace; yet wherever he enters war makes its appearance. As soon as he comes to take a new life in your soul, self-love raises all the passions to oppose his reign. In this encounter you cannot remain neutral. If you desire the life of Jesus Christ within you, make continual war on self-love, with which you can never form any truce. You have no sooner conceived a good desire, than the enemy opposes its fulfilment, and uses every effort to render your resolutions ineffectual. Already have you experienced this to your great prejudice. Prepare

yourself therefore for the combat, that you may not again be surprised. Imagine you see Jesus Christ pointing to these martyrs, and hear him say: "Unless you become as these little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* xviii. 3.) Often repeat within yourself: "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in his holy place? The innocent in hands and clean of heart." (*Ps.* xxiii. 3.) If affliction overwhelm you, console yourself with this thought of the Royal Prophet: "He will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence: O Lord of hosts blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." (*Ps.* lxxxiii. 13.) "Keep thou my soul and deliver me. I shall not be ashamed, for I have hoped in thee. The innocent and the upright have adhered to me: because I have waited on thee." (*Ps.* xxiv. 20, 21.)

TWENTY-THIRD OF JANUARY

On the return of Jesus Christ from Egypt.

1st POINT. Consider—as Jesus Christ fled into Egypt at the command of his Eternal Father, so he returns into his own country in obedience to the same all-ruling will. This return teaches us that affliction shall not continue for ever; but that we must await the order of God for our deliverance. Whilst he is pleased to leave you in poverty, sickness, or dereliction, be not dejected, nor wearied with the endurance of your suffering: listen to these words which he speaks in your interior: "Remain until I shall tell you to return. Abandon yourself to me without reserve, in the least things as well as in the greater. I except nothing, but desire to find you in total disengagement. I have said, and I again repeat,—Give all for all." If it please divine goodness to lead you back from Egypt, by con-

soling and terminating your pains, regard in this dispensation only his paternal will. For as there is danger in being dejected in adversity, so you should fear a want of moderation in prosperity. Preserve yourself, therefore, in a holy indifference, which will dispose you to bless God equally in peace and in trouble, moderating your joy when heaven is favourable, and your sadness when it ordains you to undergo any humiliation. Let Jesus and Mary be your models: seek in them your consolation, make them the objects of your joy and your desires; learn of them to receive with respect all that comes from the hand of God. Render yourself worthy of his paternal care, and remain in repose under that Providence, which will make all things succeed for his own glory and your salvation.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ returns into Nazareth, after the death of Herod, and of those who sought his life. He will not establish his dwelling in your soul, until you have destroyed his enemies. He goes not to Jerusalem, because the son of Herod then succeeded his father. He retires into Nazareth, which signifies a flower, because his delight is among the flowers of virtue, and he flies the tumult of irregular passions. We must die to ourselves, in order peaceably to enjoy the presence of Jesus and Mary. We must renounce all commerce with the world, if we would see Jesus Christ like Zacheus. We must say with holy Simeon: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation." (*Luke*, ii. 29, 30.) This example, says St Jerome, demonstrates that he who has the happiness to see Jesus Christ, should die to all that is earthly. For his love possesses a virtue that causes us to die to all our vicious inclinations. I say all; for frequently one succeeds another, as Archelaus succeeded Herod: and whilst a single passion reigns in the heart, Jesus Christ fears to enter, because he could not dwell

there in security. How have the saints arrived at such perfection, and such intimate union with God? By the universal mortification of all earthly affections. We are too much pre-occupied by passion and attachment to terrestrial objects. Seldom do we perfectly overcome a single vice; thus we always remain slothful and tepid in the service of God. Were we dead to ourselves, and interiorly disengaged, we could then taste divine things, and acquire an experimental knowledge of what passes in heavenly contemplation.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ returns to his own country, after enduring a tedious exile, in order to deliver us from the eternal exile of the reprobate. As his patience under the privations of banishment should encourage us to undergo cheerfully the miseries of this life, which is truly an exile difficult of support, his return should dilate our hearts with joy, in the belief that heaven, our dear country, is open to receive us; the angels expect our arrival, and the Son of God liberally offers us the graces necessary for happily terminating our journey. How happy is the man who, after enduring with perfect resignation all the pains of his banishment, is at length recalled to praise God eternally in his heavenly city! As hitherto the voice of his sorrow resounded in these plaintive words: "Upon the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept." (*Ps.* cxxxvi. 1.) So beholding himself now at the end of his labours, in the joy of his heart he exclaims with the Royal Prophet—"I rejoiced at the things that were said to me, we shall go into the house of the Lord." (*Ps.* cxxi. 1.) "O most happy mansion of the city above! O most bright day of eternity, which knows no night, but is always enlightened by the sovereign truth! a day always joyful, always secure, and never changing its state to the contrary! O that this day would shine upon us, and all those temporal things would come to an end! It shines indeed upon the

saints, resplendent with everlasting brightness; but to us, pilgrims upon earth, it is seen only as afar off and through a glass. The citizens of heaven know how joyful that day is; but the banished children of Eve lament that this our day is bitter and tedious. The days of this life are short and evil, full of sorrows and miseries: where man is defiled with many sins, is ensnared with many passions, attacked with many fears, disquieted with many cares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, accompanied with many errors. O! when will there be an end of these evils? When, Lord, wilt thou come and bring me forth from prison?" (*Imit.* b. iii. 48.)

TWENTY-FOURTH OF JANUARY.

On Jesus Christ going to the Temple at the age of twelve years.

1st Point. Consider—the Blessed Virgin conducts the child Jesus to Jerusalem at the solemn festival of the passover, instructing us how to celebrate the appointed festivals in a holy manner, according to what our Lord has said by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy own will in my holy day, and call the sabbath delightful, and the holy of the Lord glorious, and glorify him, while thou dost not thy own ways, and thy own will is not found to speak a word; then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob thy father. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (*Isaiah*, lviii. 13, 14.) Consider those days consecrated to the commemoration of the divine mysteries and benefits, or the virtues and rewards of the saints, as a special time of the most

precious graces, and endeavour to profit of the admonition given by the author of the "Imitation of Christ:" "About the time of the principal festivals, we must renew our good exercises, and more frequently implore the prayers of the saints. We ought to make our resolution from festival to festival, as if we were then to depart out of this world, and to come to the everlasting festival. Therefore we ought carefully to prepare ourselves at times of devotion, and converse more devoutly, and keep all observances more strictly, as being shortly to receive the reward of our labours from God; and if it be deferred, let us believe that we are not well prepared, and that we are as yet unworthy of the great glory which shall be revealed in us at the appointed time; and let us endeavour to prepare ourselves for our departure."

2nd Point. Consider—the festivals solemnized by the church should constitute the delight of the devout soul, as they do that of God himself; for they are days especially devoted to prayer and all the works of piety, in which holy exercise the true Christian seeks his only felicity, while sojourning in this *valley of tears*. Moreover, we know from the words of God himself, that his delight is to converse familiarly with the children of men, which he does more willingly on those days particularly dedicated to his divine service. Therefore, we should employ them in such duties of piety, as are most pleasing to his adorable Majesty. Beware of indulging in your wonted imperfections, lest you change those days of benediction into days of wrath, and give a triumph to the enemies of your salvation. Days of tepidity and sin are festivals for them, as days of penitence and fervour are festivals for heaven. "We call the affliction of a penitent soul," says Origen, "a day of festivity. If then you would celebrate a heavenly festival, if you would give joy to the angels, afflict and humble your soul; permit it not to indulge its desires;

suffer not that it expand and dissipate in vain amusements; but afflict it, humble it, in as much as is possible." For, Lord, the sorrow of the contrite heart is a confession of thy glory; and the penitent recollection of sin is the praise of thy infinite goodness.

3rd Point. Consider—the Blessed Virgin leads the child Jesus to Jerusalem, to visit the holy places, to participate in the sacrifices, and to hear the explanation of the law. The Incarnate Wisdom enters the temple, not to exercise the office of a master, but to teach you the duty of a disciple. From this example we learn to frequent the church, that we may assist at the sacrifice, give ourselves to prayer, approach the sacraments, and attend to the word of God; to the end we may be instructed in our obligations, and acquire the science of the saints; for there is nothing more necessary to a blind man than to see. Blindness is a species of death and of perpetual mourning. The same may be said of the ignorance of holy things, which is to the mind what blindness is to the body. There is no deformity comparable to that of the soul which knows not God, and which the Holy Ghost has not illumined by his divine light. How are we enlightened but by the word of God? And where shall we hear that word, but in the house of God? There you learn what is necessary, in order to repair the time you have lost in sin, to dispose yourself for death, and to gain a happy eternity. Therefore the Royal Prophet says, "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God. For the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young ones: Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever. For better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject

in the house of my God, rather than dwell in the tabernacles of sinners. For God loveth mercy and truth: the Lord will give grace and glory." (*Ps.* lxxxiii.)

TWENTY-FIFTH OF JANUARY.

On Jesus Christ remaining in Jerusalem while his Parents knew it not.

1st Point. Consider—we learn from this mystery that many lose God by sin, and perceive not what they lose, nor understand the evil they commit. Therefore, St. Gregory says, that Job compares sin to the moth; for as that insect silently destroys the most costly garment, so sin corrupts the unguarded soul before it is aware of its danger. Blinded by malice, which is as the moth of the soul, it sins without remorse, and is insensible to the loss of grace and spiritual life. How miserable the condition of man, when reduced to this pitiable blindness! He no longer seeks a remedy for the evil of which he is ignorant. He that feels not his captivity, seeks not his ransom, says St. Bernard. He will remain always a slave; he will live and die in the slavery from which he will never be delivered. Fly this criminal ignorance; close not your eyes through fear of beholding the evil you commit. Rather say with David: Lord, the image of my crime is always present to my mind; I look upon it with horror and detestation. Vouchsafe to turn thine eyes from it, O my God! To me it belongs continually to behold, but to thee to efface it, in thy mercy, for ever. If you desire that God would forget your sins, says St. Augustin, bear them always in *your* mind; for if you cast away the remembrance, he will reproach you with it to your confusion.

2nd Point. Consider—we learn from this mystery

that we may lose God without fault on our part. To lose sanctifying grace by mortal sin, is to lose God as sinners who live in his disgrace, the slaves of the devil. To lose the sweetness of the divine presence, and sensible devotion, by venial sin, is to lose God as the imperfect, who, though not his enemies, are cold in his love. To lose sensible devotion, and suffer the privation of heavenly consolation, without occasion on our part, is to lose God as the saints, who have frequently endured the most painful dereliction, without losing the peace of the soul and perfect submission to the divine will. Adore here the secrets of Divine Providence, which treats its dearest children with such seeming severity: this trial is permitted in order to strengthen the soul, and render virtue more solid; to prove its fidelity, and give opportunity of increasing merit by the practice of patience, resignation, confidence, and frequent recourse to prayer; or to preserve it in profound humility, by the fear of having incurred this punishment by some hidden sin, according to the thought of the Royal Prophet: "Before I was humbled I offended." (*Ps.* cxviii 67.) "I give thee thanks that thou hast thus chastised me: thou hast done it for my good to the end that I may serve thee with more exactitude and fervour." In fine, this trial is permitted to teach us, that if God thus proves his faithful servants, he will not spare us, who have so often provoked him to abandon us, and that we should fear, lest the bad use we make of his grace, and the little esteem in which we hold it, may draw down his punishment.

3rd Point. Consider—we learn from this mystery, that to avoid losing God, or forcing him to forsake us, we must renounce all human respect, and remove every obstacle to his divine presence in our hearts. Meditate these words of the child Jesus: "Did you not know that I must be about the things that are my Father's?" (*Luke*, ii. 49.) This is the first oracle of the Son of

God recorded in the Gospel; and we should place it among the most important maxims of Christianity. How numerous the motives that should oblige the devout follower of Christ to the practice of meditation, pious reading, examens, participation of the sacraments, and other exercises of piety towards God, and to the flight or removal of every impediment to the fervent performance of these holy duties. These motives are, the will of God, the example of Jesus Christ, our own spiritual advancement, fidelity, gratitude, the necessity we are under of doing penance. To what tend so many lights, inspirations, resolutions, protestations, sighs, and prayers, but to lead to the practice of this grand maxim? And when will you reduce it to practice, if not when the occasion is presented, and God solicits and presses you to return to him? Shall it be said that you are so ungrateful as to prefer a human respect, a trifling interest, a vain phantom, to considerations so pressing, and so important? "O senseless Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?" (*Gal.* iii 1.) "I am in fear for you, lest perhaps I have laboured in vain among you." (*Gal.* iv. 11.)

TWENTY-SIXTH OF JANUARY.

How we lose the Child Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—in what manner the Blessed Virgin lost the Child Jesus, notwithstanding the intense love that inseparably united her heart to that of her Divine Son: reflect also, how that which occurred without any fault on her part, is frequently a chastisement to you. The Blessed Virgin lost her beloved Son in returning from Jerusalem, which is situated in the most elevated part of Judea, and in going down to Nazareth. This circumstance gives occasion to remark, that the

loss of grace, or at least of the presence of God and of his divine consolations, frequently occurs, when, after being cleansed from sin by penance, and united to God in the holy communion, we by little and little fall from the fervour of our charity, and return to our accustomed vices and defects. "When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is made worse than the first." (*Matt.* xii. 43, *et seq.*) It avails little that the house is cleansed or ornamented; if the impure spirit find it empty he enters without resistance. A man who, after a good confession, and holy resolutions of amendment, forgets the sentiments with which God had inspired him, neglects pious exercises, and commits venial sin without scruple, flatters himself with a false peace, saying there is nothing to fear. For shortly Satan, who sleeps not, will surprise him, and become master of his house, because it is empty. In vain has this man cleansed his conscience, and laboured for a time in the work of his perfection. He has only prepared a dwelling for the devil. How important to renew frequently the resolutions formed in the presence of God, and preserve diligently the fervour with which we have entered his service.

2nd Point. Consider—the Blessed Virgin lost the child Jesus, reasonably supposing that he accompanied St. Joseph, and the other persons of their own country who were returning home. This supposition that her Son was amongst those of their own company, was not a false judgment or error, but a probable opinion, on which she might prudently act. We may lose God either through ignorance, inadvertence, or error. We

may lose him through ignorance, because we do not possess that superabundant light, with which the greatest saints were not always favoured. We may lose him through inadvertence and want of vigilance, which only becomes culpable when proceeding from negligence. This obliges us to excuse many defects, from which even the most holy persons are not exempt, but which nevertheless do not render them displeasing in the eyes of God; and this should teach us to avoid many rash judgments, by interpreting their actions as charity and Christian simplicity demand. We may lose God through error, which is inseparable from sin, according to St. Augustin, who says, that no one can lose God, unless he be deceived, nor seek him again unless prevented by the light which warns and discovers to him his loss. For alas, who would lose God did he seriously consider the consequences? And who would neglect to seek him, did he understand what he had lost. "He that loseth Jesus, loseth exceeding much, and more than if he lost the whole world. Whoever finds Jesus, finds a good treasure, yea, good above all goods." (*Imit.* b. ii. 8.)

3rd Point. Consider—the Blessed Virgin loses the child Jesus through the confidence she reposes in him. Knowing that he is omnipotent, and that nothing can happen but by his appointment or permission, she fears nothing on his account; and this her confidence proves in the sequel to be just. Ours on the contrary is often defective. For many lose God by a presumptuous confidence, persuading themselves there is nothing to fear, even where the danger is most imminent. Some ground their hope of salvation solely on the goodness of God, as if their own efforts were not required for its attainment. Some again confide too much in themselves; others are not sufficiently diffident of creatures, and perish in the danger they do not apprehend. O how many are thus deceived and lost! They imagine such a contract to be lawful, such a vengeance but a just

defence, such a society not attended with danger, such a companion to have no evil intention; and relying on this false confidence, which flatters their inclinations, they are drawn to the precipice into which they unwarily fall. Those who enjoy prosperity, either spiritual or temporal, are more subject to this defect, and lose God more easily than others; some because they do not sufficiently fear temptation, and distrust their own weakness; others, because they forget eternity in the smiles of fortune, and the flattering caresses of the world. The means of avoiding all these snares is to walk in the divine presence with filial reverence and holy fear, assiduously cultivating an intimate union of heart with God. "O God, be not thou far from me: O my God, make haste to my help!" (*Ps.* lxx. 12.) "For behold they that go far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that are disloyal to thee. But it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God." (*Ps.* lxxii. 27, 28.)

TWENTY-SEVENTH OF JANUARY.

How we should seek the Child Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—as soon as the Blessed Virgin perceives the absence of her Divine Son, she defers not a moment in seeking him, to teach us with what diligence we should seek God when he withdraws from us, or when we have lost him through our own fault. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee." (*Eccles.* v. 8, 9.) The present moment of life is the only one in your power, and it may, perhaps, be your last. If you allow it to pass, and death to surprise you, the evil is irremediable. Man, while in this life,

may lose God, which is his greatest misery: he may also find him, which is an infinite happiness; but he must seek him, as did the Blessed Virgin, without delay. For if he is surprised by death, his loss is irreparable. Beware then of abusing the time, and slighting the grace with which you are now favoured. "Say not to thy friend: Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give to thee; when thou canst give at present." (*Prov.* iii. 28.) Jesus Christ, the best of friends, demands your conversion; he solicits your return at the present moment. Wherefore, O sinner, do you delay to be converted? Fear you not that a sudden death may deprive you of the day you destine to that all important work? What time would be too long to labour for a happy eternity? Employ therein at least the short remainder of your life. "Give not thy honour to strangers and thy years to the cruel." (*Prov.* v. 9.) The time you trifle away, is an offering made to the demon; that consecrated to penance, is a sacrifice presented to Jesus Christ. Which merits the preference? There is no place for deliberation; there is no time to be lost. If you neglect the present favourable opportunity, you may, perhaps, incur the punishment denounced by our Lord in those words: "You shall seek me, and shall not find me; and you shall die in your sin. (*John*, vii. 8.)

2nd Point. Consider—the diligence with which the Blessed Virgin seeks her Divine Son, is an effect of ardent love, which impels her to return without delay, and allows her no repose, until she had found the object of all her desires. Thus should we seek the child Jesus, when we have lost either the sweetness of his presence, or his holy grace. "You shall seek me, and shall find me, when you shall seek me with your heart;" (*Jer.* xxix. 13;) that is to say, with a heart inflamed with love, an undivided heart that desires God alone. St. Bonaventure says: You must seek God in your

entire heart, and not in some part thereof. You must seek him who said: "I have sought thee with all my heart." (*Ps.* cxviii. 10.) You must seek Jesus Christ, as he who seeing his house on fire, seeks the water to extinguish the flame; as he who hungers seeks bread; in fine, as one condemned to death seeks to preserve his life. For Jesus Christ is the fountain of living water, that extinguishes the fire of concupiscence, which menaces our destruction. He is the bread of heaven, giving strength to walk in the way of God's commandments Finally, he is the life of our souls, delivering them from eternal death: we cannot avoid this but by seeking him with fervour. "I am thine, save thou me: my face hath sought thee: thy face, O Lord, will I still seek! Turn not away thy face from me, decline not in thy wrath from thy servant." (*Ps.* xxvi. 8, 9.) "Uphold me according to thy word, and I shall live: and let me not be confounded in my expectations." (*Ps.* cxviii. 116.)

3rd Point. Consider—the heart-felt sorrow with which the Blessed Virgin seeks her Divine Son, although she had lost him without fault. How much more cause have you to be afflicted, when you have lost him by sin? Properly speaking, we can only lose God by sin: and we can find him only by penance. The children of Israel found "in the Red Sea a way without hindrance," (*Sap.* cxix. 7,) to travel to the promised land; and sinners, in order to arrive at heaven, have no other road than the sea of penance. God approaches us by this sea, and by the same we arrive to him, says an excellent author. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy paths in many waters: and thy footsteps shall not be known. Thou hast conducted thy people like sheep." (*Ps.* lxxvi. 20, 21.) Penance is the way by which God conducts us to heaven, "by the hand of Moses and Aaron," that is to say, by the confessor or director to whose care we are committed. Through the waters of compunction you

must open a path to the heavenly land of promise. O blessed tears, that purify the soul from sin, detach it from the earth, and exalt it to heaven, even to the glory of the saints! Ah! unhappy sinners, you know not the price of your tears, you are ignorant of their value. You weep over imaginary evils, whilst you behold with indifference the supreme evil of sin, which your tears could blot out for ever. The only sorrow worthy of our tears, is that with which we should seek Jesus, when we have lost him by sin. To repair this loss, sin must be annihilated by contrition, and its traces effaced by the tears of sincere compunction

TWENTY-EIGHTH OF JANUARY.

How we may find the Child Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—there are three classes of persons who seek God, and, like the Blessed Virgin, find him after three days. Thus penitents find him after three days. The first of these days is one of contrition; it is a day of affliction, atonement, and reconciliation. Sin has three fatal effects: it sullies the soul, it offends God, and draws on the sinner an eternal punishment. Contrition effaces the stain of the soul, appeases the anger of God, and satisfies for the penalty of sin. Of this day it is written, "The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness." (*Ezech.* xxxiii. 12.) The second is that of confession, a day of confusion, of which may be said—"All the day long my shame is before me: and the confusion of my face hath covered me." (*Ps.* xliii. 16.) This shame is not salutary; it mainly contributes to our justification. The third is that of satisfaction, which obliges the penitent to renounce sin, to despoil himself of the old man, and to burst asunder the

bonds of evil custom. Such is the first condition "of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob." (*Ps.* xxiii. 6.) Such are the three days after or rather during which they find him. For if contrition be sincere, it is a day of grace to the sinner, who, enlightened by the true sun of justice, comes forth from the darkness of sin, in the same moment in which he detests it, from a motive of pure love. O blessed day in which we are born to grace! day of salvation that rejoices heaven, and puts a period to our miseries! day on which we may say with the apostle: "The night is past, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light." (*Rom.* xiii. 12.)

2nd Point. Consider—the just seek God, and find him also after three days. The first is that of evangelical poverty, which should be voluntary, humble, and perseverant. Some, says St. Bonaventure, are willing to be poor, on condition that all their wants are supplied; they despise riches, but will not endure contempt. Those persons find not Jesus Christ. Evangelical poverty cannot exist with pride, and the love of our own ease and convenience. It is better to be rich and humble than poor and proud. The second is that of purity, wherein the mind and heart must be detached from all that is earthly, and this can only be effected by the perfect mortification of the senses. As these are the ordinary channels of temptation, the combat against them is the most frequent and dangerous. Whence it is that few so guard their senses, as always to come off victorious, and be able to say: "Lord, O Lord, the strength of my salvation: thou hast overshadowed my head in the day of battle. Give me not up, O Lord, from my desire to the wicked." (*Ps.* cxxxix. 8, 9.) The third is that of obedience, which includes not only the execution of what God, by the voice of superiors, enjoins, but also entire submission of will and judgment, without murmur, excuse, or delay: in fine, without

regard either to our interest or inclination. This is the day of which Solomon says, "an obedient man shall speak of victory." (*Prov.* xxi. 28.) Happy they who follow Jesus Christ into the desert during these three days: they shall enjoy the sweetness of his presence, and the effects of his mercy; to them will he address these words: "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." (*Matt.* xv. 32.)

3rd POINT. Consider—the perfect seek God, and find him after three days in a manner still more excellent. The first is that of repose. St. Augustin says, that a good conscience alone is tranquil; and this tranquillity is the repose of the heart. "Carry no burdens on the Sabbath day, and bring them not in by the gates of Jerusalem" (*Jer.* xvii. 21); that is to say, beware of charging yourself with worldly occupation, and let nothing that could sully or trouble the imagination, enter through the senses, which are the gates of the soul. For, in order to give yourself to contemplation, you must be exempt from the embarrassment of temporal affairs, and the phantoms of sensible and corporal objects. The second is that of mental prayer, a day of light, which comprehends thought, meditation, and contemplation. When the soul rests not on a particular object, but passes from one to another, it is called thought; when it applies to a specific subject, it is meditation; but when it is fixed on an object that elevates it above itself, it is contemplation. O happy day which commences with thought, which increases with meditation, and which contemplation beholds in all its brightness! This day is followed by a third, which is that of divine love, when the devout soul, contemplating the sufferings of her spouse, the benefits she has received, and the eternal glory he has prepared for her in heaven, breaks forth into this admirable canticle: "Go

forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart." (*Cant.* iii. 11.) Which is the day of joy to the heart of Jesus? The day of eternity, wherein he has prepared a crown of glory for those who seek him; for then he will rejoice in the happiness of his elect. Which is the day of joy to the heart of the spouse? That on which she finds Jesus, after having sought him with love. In him she finds the source of all delights, an abundant and eternal recompense.

TWENTY-NINTH OF JANUARY.

On the means of preserving Jesus in the Soul.

1st Point. Consider—it suffices not to find Jesus, we must preserve and guard him in the soul The Blessed Virgin having found her Divine Son, separated no more from him; the spouse in the Canticle also having found her beloved, let him into the house of her mother, that is the church, with a firm resolution "not" to "let him go." (*Cant.* iii. 4.) If you desire to retain Jesus Christ, you must resolve with courage to undergo the difficulties you will have to encounter. The heavenly spouse loves your soul, and desires to establish therein his eternal dwelling; but there are many enemies who would banish him thence: the world, the flesh, the passions, would force him to yield to them his place. The tepid and inconstant soul betrays her spouse; she chases him from her heart, and gives entrance to the enemy, from whom she suffers a thousand outrages. The faithful and courageous soul, on the contrary, says with the spouse—"I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and I will not let him go." (*Cant.* iii. 4.) Though hell should rise up

against me, it shall never separate me from him. Neither the caresses nor the menaces of the world and the flesh shall shake my resolution. Jesus Christ shall reign in my heart for ever. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (*Romans*, viii. 38, 39.)

2nd POINT. Consider—that in order to preserve Jesus Christ in the soul, you must be vigilant, and place around him faithful and generous guards "Behold three-score valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel, surround the bed of Solomon, all holding swords, and most expert in war." (*Cant.* iii. 7, 8.) These valiant warriors who watch around King Solomon during his repose, are good thoughts; serious consideration on the truths of eternity; firm and efficacious resolutions which guard the soul wherein God reposes, holding it in humility and fear, defending it against the illusions of the evil one, fortifying and establishing it solidly in virtue. "The soul," says St. Augustin, "that is sustained by holy thoughts, becomes impenetrable, invincible, and immutable: the spirit that is fortified by a lively faith in eternal truths, remains firm and unshaken by all the terrors with which it is menaced by the world and the devil" If, therefore, the world, and the prince of darkness by whom it is governed, would tempt you to vanity, pleasure, and desire of riches, attach yourself firmly to Jesus Christ, watch around him, preserve inviolably the promises you have made; embrace him so closely in the arms of an humble confidence in his goodness, and respectful fear of his judgments, that all the powers of hell will not change your purpose. "He that fears God," says the Royal Prophet, "his heart is strengthened, he shall not be moved until he look over his enemies." (*Ps.* iii. 8.) "For

according to the height of the heavens above the earth, he hath strengthened his mercy towards them that fear him." (*Ps.* cii. 11.)

3rd Point. Consider—if, notwithstanding all your vigilance, Jesus withdraws from you his sensible presence; you have, indeed, cause of affliction, but not of discouragement. The absence of Jesus, though short, seems long to the soul that loves. Yet he often subtracts the sensible consolation of his presence, in order that you may seek him with more fervour, and find him with more joy. According to St. Augustin, that which you seek with difficulty, you find with pleasure. Would you more promptly find, and carefully preserve the presence of Jesus Christ, prepare for him a dwelling in your heart, listen attentively to his words, and follow his divine example. For this end have recourse to his blessed Mother, and endeavour to merit her favour. From her you will learn to meditate, and to practise all that her divine Son has taught by word and example. "For Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." (*Luke*, ii. 19.) From her maternal heart you must draw this treasure. Listen to her words—"I love them that love me: and they that in the morning early watch for me, shall find me. With me are riches and glory, glorious riches and justice.....I walk in the way of justice, in the midst of the paths of judgment, that I may enrich them that love me, and fill their treasures." (*Prov.* viii. 17, 18, 20, 21.)

THIRTIETH OF JANUARY.

Reflections on the foregoing Mystery.

1st Point. Consider—"They found him in the temple." (*Luke*, ii. 46.) They seek the child Jesus "among their kinsfolk and acquaintance," but they find

him not. If *you* would find him, "forget thy people and the house of thy father, and the king shall desire thy beauty, for he is the Lord thy God, and the people will adore Him." (*Ps.* xliv.) The more you sequester yourself from creatures, the more easily you will have access to him. He is lost among your friends and relatives, he disappears in the crowd, says the learned William D'Auvergn. He is found at Jerusalem, not at Capharnaum, which signifies a place of delights. He is found in the temple, not in the palaces of the great; there the Magi sought him in vain. He is found among the doctors, not amongst those engrossed by secular business. O good Jesus, if you are not found amongst your own relatives, how shall I find you among mine? If your Blessed Mother with difficulty found you, though pierced with sorrow, how shall I find you amidst vain joy and idle gratifications? Therefore I renounce all human consolations, the vain pleasures, and the deceitful peace which the world presents, that by the exercise of compunction and penance, I may find the true peace and heavenly consolations which the presence of Jesus imparts to the penitent sinner.

2nd Point. Consider—"They found him.....sitting in the midst of the doctors." (*Luke*, ii 46.) Jesus ranks himself as a disciple, although he is the teacher of the doctors, who should appear amongst them as a sun in the midst of the planets! His modesty gains their hearts; while they are lost in admiration of the wisdom and discretion manifested in his questions and replies. His zeal obliges him to give them proof of his doctrine, and his humility conceals the supreme dignity of his divine person. He stood not in need of their instructions, since he is "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." (*John*, i. 9.) But you required this example, to teach you not to confide in your own prudence in whatever regards your actions or conduct; because, as St. Bernard says, he

who trusts to his own counsel, becomes the disciple of a fool. "I conjure you, my brethren," says the same father, "you who are as yet but newly born to grace, and who have not sufficient experience to distinguish between good and evil, that you do not follow your own judgment or abound in your own sense, lest you be surprised by the wily enemy, who unceasingly lays his snares for souls aspiring to perfection." Be persuaded that you are not capable of being your own guide. Besides the grace of God, you stand in need of human aid. No one is so weak, no one is so easily vanquished, as he who has no guide or director in the ways of God.

3rd Point. Consider—"And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." (*Luke*, ii. 48.) This is not the murmur of impatience, it is the overflowing love of a mother's heart, expressing its feelings of mingled joy and sorrow in this tender complaint. But the Son of God replies: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (*Luke*, ii. 49.) O sublime words! The Virgin did not comprehend their full extent. For who could thoroughly understand the honour and service due to the infinite Majesty of God? What created intelligence conceive all that the only begotten of the Father should do and suffer for such an object? Know ye not that I am come into the world only to re-establish the reign of my Father's glory, and obtain the salvation of mankind? Are you ignorant that this is the only important "business," and that we must forsake all when the divine honour and service demand the sacrifice? Alas! how few are able to comprehend the extent of their duty towards Almighty God! O Christian! you are born for a nobler end than to be a slave to this world! your occupation is to serve God, to secure the salvation of your soul, to labour for heaven and eternity. God is your Father. He has given

you a temporal, and promises you an eternal life. What should you do for the love of such a Father, who seeks only your benefit? Should you not value the honour of serving him above all things? Yes, this is the *one thing necessary*. "For what will it avail a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Is not God more than the world, the soul more than the body, eternity more than time?

My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who wert sought during three days by thy blessed Mother, and at length found by her in the temple, grant me grace ardently to desire thee, earnestly to seek, and happily to find thee. Ah! Lord, who givest to those that ask, who art found by those who seek, and who openest to those who knock, refuse not to me what thou hast promised to all; and since thou hast given us an example of perfect obedience, in returning to Nazareth with thy Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, and being "subject to them," grant that I may so bend my own will, as to subject myself perfectly and devotedly to thee, and to every human creature for the love of thee

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THIRTY-FIRST OF JANUARY.

On the return of Jesus Christ to Nazareth.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus Christ, by an admirable secret of his wisdom, would remain unknown to the world until the age of thirty years. His whole life is admirable, and difficult to comprehend; but his hidden life, from the age of twelve years until his baptism, is totally unknown. For what mind can conceive the works he wrought during that time, since the Scripture is silent thereon? We must then adore in silence, and say with the prophet: "O Lord, how great are thy works! thy thoughts are exceeding deep." (*Ps.* xci. 6.)

"I shall not die, but live; and shall declare the works of the Lord." I desire life only that I may bless thee, O my God! "Open ye to me the gates of Justice: I will go into them, and give praise to the Lord." (*Ps.* cxvii. 17, 19.)

O true Wisdom! teach me the happiness and benefits of a hidden life, and so imprint the lesson on my heart, that I may place all my ambition in following thee in that obscure and lowly path.

2nd POINT. Consider—how astonishing that the Son of God should so abase himself as to pass for the son of an artizan, and to exercise his trade. This humility is more to be admired than the most splendid actions of his life; and the greatest of his miracles is to have performed none during so long a repose. Ah! Lord, is humility so difficult of practice, that the Most High must descend to teach us its importance? Yes, truly, there is no virtue more exalted or more difficult. He that despises himself, and desires with his whole heart to be despised by others, is arrived at the highest and most difficult degree of virtue. Believe not that you have made any progress until you have arrived at this point. Obedience necessarily springs from a humility so profound: and notwithstanding the dignity of his divine person, he permits himself to be absolutely governed by his Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, while on his part he obeys with indifference, fervour, and perseverance.

3rd POINT. Consider—four other virtues taught by Jesus Christ during his hidden life. The first is the flight of idleness, the mother of all evil. He was occupied exteriorly in the labour of his hands, and interiorly employed in praying for sinners, treating of their salvation with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and regulating the whole economy of the house of God. The second is liberty of heart, and disengagement from all the cares of the earth; for he was in the world as if he

were not: his heart, intentions, affections, thoughts, and desires, were infinitely elevated above all that is perishable. The love of solitude and silence are the other virtues which the Son of God practised in Nazareth. There are two solitudes: that of the heart, which can be preserved by a holy recollection of mind, even amidst the conversations and business of the world; that of the body, which actually separates us from human society, but is of little effect if not united with the former. Behold your divine model in Nazareth, where he leads a retired life: what miracles might he not have wrought? what conversions could he not have operated by the efficacy of his word? Nevertheless he remains in silence, to teach you a love of retirement, from which you should go forth, only when the glory of God or the salvation of your neighbour require it. Fear not to lose your time or bury your talents. Jesus lost nothing of the fruit of his labours, by remaining in solitude until his thirtieth year. "Whosoever, therefore, aims at arriving at internal and spiritual things, must, with Jesus, go aside from the crowd. No man is secure in appearing abroad, but he who would willingly lie hid at home. No man securely speaks but he who loves to hold his peace. In silence and quiet the devout soul goes forward, and learns the secrets of the Scriptures. It is better to lie hid, and take care of one's self, than, neglecting one's self, to work even miracles. It is commendable for a religious man to go seldom abroad, to fly being seen, and not to desire to see men." (*Imitat.* b. i. 20.)

FIRST OF FEBRUARY.

On Jesus advancing in wisdom, age, and grace.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and man." (*Luke,*

ii. 52.) Meditate on the motives which oblige you to increase in grace and virtue, amongst which the most important is the example that Jesus Christ has given you during his life. Ponder therefore the words of St. Bernard. "Did he who was the Creator of the world and of man, remain inactive whilst he conversed visibly with men? The holy Scripture testifies that he travelled through the provinces of Judea, doing good to all, and healing those that were sick. St. Paul says, Jesus Christ was obedient even unto death: let your progress, O Christian, have no other bounds. However long, therefore, your course may be, unless you persevere unto death, you shall not gain the crown. The Son of God will not rank you amongst the conquerors, he will not hold you as a disciple or as a friend, because you dishonour him by your pusillanimity. The disciple who makes progress, does honour to his instructor. Whoever does not advance in the school of Jesus Christ, is not worthy to have him for a master, much less for a friend. St. John assures us that he who would live in Jesus Christ, should walk as he walked, and follow the path he has traced. He has run on with ardour as a giant in his course; if then we would not be put to confusion, we must also run in his footsteps. Glorious Conqueror, who hast promised to draw all unto thee, when thou shalt be elevated on the cross, draw me after thee; grant that I may draw others, and that together we may run in the odour of thy virtues.

2nd Point. Consider—three general means of advancing in perfection, comprised in these words of the prophet: "Blessed is the man whose help is from thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set." (*Ps.* xxxiii. 6, 7.) "Blessed is the man whose help is from thee." This is the first and most necessary; because, without the divine assistance we can do nothing. What

am I of myself, says St. Augustin, but a blind guide that conducts to a precipice, having nothing of my own, but an unhappy facility of casting myself into peril. "In his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps." This second means of advancing consists in the love of God, which is seated in the heart. For the progress required of us is no other than his love. Ascend towards God by loving him: the more you love, the nearer you approach unto him. But remember the place of your dwelling 'is a valley of tears;" and that paradise to which you aspire, is a place of eternal and inconceivable delights. Suffice it to say, "it is the place which he hath set" for his friends. These words comprise the third means of advancing in perfection; that is, a spirit of compunction, by which we despise this world, and sigh after heaven. Our love in this life is not one of enjoyment, but of suffering; it is nourished with tears and ardent desires, which are inflamed in proportion as charity augments. When this divine virtue is perfected in the soul, she says with the apostle: "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." (*Phil.* i 23.)

3rd POINT. Consider—three other particular means for advancing in perfection, according to St. Charles Borromeo. "If you desire," says the saint, "to advance in a Christian life, and perfect yourself in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in his virtues and spirit, observe these three points of practice. In the first place, imagine each day that you then only commence, and endeavour to serve God with as much fervour, as if it were the first of your conversion. Secondly, never lose the remembrance of the divine presence; for, as the apostle says, 'We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels and to men.' (*Cor.* iv. 9.) Finally, let all your actions tend to God by a pure intention, and an ardent desire of fulfilling his will." Never say it is enough; be not satisfied with what you are, if you would attain

that to which you are not arrived. From the moment you conceive a vain complaisance in yourself, you arrest the progress of your perfection, and, instead of advancing, you retrograde. Those who relax in the desire of advancing, are in danger of falling: our spiritual advancement depends principally on the desire of advancing in the way of virtue; and, as St. Bernard says, "the indefatigable care we take, and the continual efforts we make to perfect ourselves, is a state of perfection; and the desire of advancing a notable progress." Earnestly implore this grace of God, in the words of St. Augustin: "My Lord, I love thee; and if I love thee not as I ought, grant that I may love thee more. O love, ever burning and never extinguished; my God, who art charity itself, enkindle in my heart that divine fire which animates thy saints, and transforms them into thee by love."

SECOND OF FEBRUARY.

Festival of the Purification.

1st Point. Consider—this day is accomplished the prediction of Malachy: "Behold I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently the Lord, whom you seek, and the angel of the testament, whom you desire, shall come to his temple." (*Mal.* iii. 1.) Who is this sovereign ruler but Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords, who wields the sceptre of the universe? He whose coming kings and prophets have desired to see, and after whom they have ardently sighed. In this quality you should receive him this day as king of your heart, which is his temple, with all the respect and joy his presence deserves. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion: shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king will come to thee, the

just and Saviour." (*Zach.* ix. 9.) The sick rejoice at the rising of the sun, captives at the presence of their liberator, the poor at the sight of a rich treasure which they unexpectedly find. Behold the Sun of Justice, who comes to you with healing on his wings—behold your treasure, your liberator, whom so many saints have desired and expected, without the favour of participating in this happiness. Should not your joy at least equal their desires? "And nevertheless," says St. Bernard, "to whom amongst us does the possession of this grace cause as much joy, as the sole promise of it hitherto enkindled in the yearning hearts of the saints of the old testament?" "I feel confounded," says this father; "and the sorrow that this tepidity causes me is such, that I cannot restrain my tears." Deplore with this holy doctor your own coldness, and endeavour to awaken in your heart a lively devotion towards Jesus Christ, in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

2nd Point. Consider—this day the prophetic words of David are fulfilled: "We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple." (*Ps.* xlvii. 10.) What is this mercy which we have received from God? It is Jesus Christ, who, in all the actions and sufferings of his life, had no other end in view but to reconcile us with God, and draw us forth from our miseries. What title can be more justly applied to him than that of mercy; since all that he has done and suffered for us, was due neither to our merits nor to our good works, but solely to his own charity? For, as the apostle says: "When the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared; not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." (*Tit.* iii. 4.) It was his infinite mercy that brought him down from heaven to be born in a stable, and to die upon a cross, and this same mercy impels him to offer himself to the Father of mercies; "that being

justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to hope of life everlasting. It is a faithful saying: and these things I will have thee affirm constantly: that they who believe in God, may be careful to excel in good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." (*Tit.* iii. 7, 8.) For since we have the happiness of receiving and lodging mercy itself, in the midst of our hearts, is it not just to follow its impulse? And what impulse can mercy inspire, but that which leads to the practice of good works, and particularly to fraternal charity. "Unto thee, O my helper, will I sing, for thou art God, my defence: my God, my mercy." (*Ps.* lviii. 18.)

3rd Point. Consider—this day is accomplished that which the prophet Aggeus had predicted: "Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first." (*Agg.* ii. 10.) Because the second temple is now honoured by the adorable presence of Jesus Christ, and the words of David begin to be accomplished: "The Lord hath made known his salvation: he hath revealed his justice in the sight of the Gentiles." (*Ps.* xcvii. 2.) "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth towards the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." (*Ps.* xcvii. 3.) Therefore all nations sing praises to the Lord with transports of joy: they sing Alleluias and offer hymns in his honour. Such were the thanksgivings of holy Simeon, in the name of both Jew and Gentile, when holding the Divine Infant in his arms, he exclaimed: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people of Israel." (*Luke*, ii. 29, *et seq.*) Learn from these words, to consider our Lord in the most holy sacrament as the glory, the light and salvation of our souls; but that we may be worthy to

participate in these three signal favours, let us approach him with a preparation and dispositions suitable to the sanctity of this mystery Let us embrace the infant Jesus with all the tenderness and love that the state of infancy which he has assumed for our salvation serves to inspire. In fine, let us reflect on the meekness, obedience, and humility of this amiable Saviour, and study to become like unto this little one; lest it may prove in vain for us that this great God has become the lowliest of men. Honour the Mother through whom we received him, and bless the Eternal Father who has given him for our salvation. Offer him this dear victim on the altar of your heart, imploring by his merits the pardon of your sins. and grace tc make such use of this most precious gift, that at the hour of death you may be able to say: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace" (*Luke*, ii. 29); for my eyes shall contemplate him in the unveiled splendour of his glory, whom I now behold by faith concealed under the sacramental species on the altar, which is the throne of thy grace and love.

THIRD OF FEBRUARY.

On the Oblation of Jesus in the Temple.

1st POINT. Consider—the Son of God, at his entrance into the temple, offers to his Eternal Father his body, soul, life, actions. labours. persecutions, and sufferings, his blood and death To his divine mind all these are present, and knowing how much they would redound to the glory of his Father, he makes of them a perfect holocaust. How precious is this offering! Never had such been presented since the formation of the world! What a victim! What a priest! With what ardour should you expect the hour of prayer'

With what gladness should you present yourself before God! How unreservedly should you consecrate to him your entire being! St. Gregory Nazianzen says, we lose nothing in giving all: whatever we give to God is returned to us a hundred-fold. Let us, he says, present to God our members which are on earth; let us consecrate all to his service. Let us become reasonable holocausts, and perfect victims. Let us give all to God, to the end that he may give all things to us. Examine what you have hitherto offered, and what you will offer for the future. No longer defer to consecrate yourself to him without reserve.

2nd Point. Consider—the Son of God offers himself with profound reverence to the Divine Majesty, which his sacred humanity regards as the source of his happiness—of whom he holds his being, life, and all the gifts of nature, grace, and glory. He also offers himself with an infinite love and zeal for the advancement of God's glory, of which he only understood the full grandeur and extent. With a sentiment of joy he beholds himself in a condition to suffer and die by obedience, in order to repair the injury offered to the Godhead by our rebellious will. He presents this offering with a love the most incomprehensible, giving all, and making a general renunciation of his rights to the honour and glory of his Father. Is such your disposition? In what esteem do you hold your vows? Do you observe your rules in a spirit of love? With what zeal are you animated for the glory of God? Can you say with David: "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay thee my vows which my lips have uttered.....I will offer up to thee holocausts full of marrow"? (*Ps.* lxv. 13, *et seq.*) You have truly entered into the house of God with holocausts, since in presenting your vows, you have offered him all that you possessed. But how do you observe them? Are they not meagre victims, devoid of marrow and juice

—that is to say, destitute of fervour, devotion, and love?

O Blessed Virgin, devoted victim of love, who hast offered thyself, with thy only beloved Son, as a perfect holocaust to the divine Majesty, obtain for me a spark of that living fire of charity which it was thy inexpressible happiness to bear in thy arms, and thereby to feed the flame that burned in thy breast, to the end it may consume all that is defective in my heart, destroying everything that belongs not to God, or tends not to his honour.

3rd Point. Consider—the fidelity with which the Son of God will accomplish, during his whole mortal life, all that he this day offers in the temple. As to the interior, his oblation will be uninterrupted; and with regard to the execution and consummation of his sacrifice, every moment of his, will be a perfect holocaust. If he permits himself to be redeemed by the Blessed Virgin, it is only that he may unite the active to the contemplative, in order to procure more advantageously the glory of his heavenly Father and the salvation of mankind, and to have the opportunity of offering himself an innocent victim for the sins of the world. How do you fulfil the promise made to God when you consecrated yourself to his service? How unfaithful and ungenerous you are in his regard. Do you not rob him of a part of that which you have devoted to his service—that is to say, the most precious moments of your life? Should you not fear his indignation, who "hates rapine in a holocaust?" Meditate these words —"After the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord." (*Luke*, ii, 22.) Where now are your excuses, pretended exemptions, frivolous interpretations? "After the days were accomplished." Behold their exact observance of the time prescribed. Is your time well regulated? Do

you not give daily proofs of inconstancy? You should endeavour equally to fulfil your duties at all times, since God is always the same. "The days of purification." All our days are days of purification. Be then careful daily to purify your soul, that it may be found stainless at the hour of death; for it is an irrevocable sentence, that nothing defiled can enter the kingdom of God. "According to the law." Are you observant of your rules, and even of your least obligations? Do you not seek dispensations, under pretext of age or of occupation? Do you not murmur when commanded that which seems difficult or humiliating? "Take hold of instruction, leave it not: keep it, because it is thy life." (*Prov.* iv. 13.) "Do ye all things without murmurings and hesitations, that you may be blameless and sincere children of God, without reproof in the midst of a perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." (*Phil.* ii. 14, 15.)

FOURTH OF FEBRUARY.

On the Blessed Virgin as our Mediatrix of Intercession in the Temple.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus enters the temple as mediator of redemption, to reconcile us with God by the oblation of his sufferings and death; and Mary accompanies him as mediatrix of intercession through his blood and merits. Admire the heroic devotedness with which the Blessed Virgin offers herself, in union with her divine Son, as a victim to the Eternal Father, for his glory and the salvation of man. Is such the generosity with which you offer yourself for the glory of God and the accomplishment of the divine will, when an occasion of sacrifice or suffering is presented to you? Do you practise that noble lesson of generous abandon-

ment into the hands of God, of which Mary gives you so touching an example on this occasion? Do you give its value and perfection to the sacrifice by uniting it with that of Jesus Christ's? Alas! it is to be feared that it is only in sentiment and speculation you make such offerings, and that you shrink with horror from the chalice the moment it is presented to you. Have recourse, then, to that generous model and compassionate advocate! to assist you for the future by her powerful intercession, when you have to encounter such trials. Address her with St. Bonaventure:—"O my powerful advocate, to thee do I lift up my eyes; my hope is in the virtue of thy name. Vouchsafe to direct all my actions to the end for which I have been created. Be thou blessed in heaven and on earth, in the sea, and in all the depths. O Mary! through your intercession we expect salvation; you are the door of the heavenly court. O my good, my very good and most merciful Mother, conduct me to the gate of salvation and obtain that my name may be written amongst the elect."

2nd Point. Consider—the dignity of Mother of God entitles the Blessed Virgin to a communication in all that belongs to her Divine Son, in as much as a pure creature is capable: this derogates not from the glory of Jesus Christ, because all that she possesses she holds from him, and renders for it an eternal homage. Jesus Christ is the supreme mediator between God and man. But being God, this exalted majesty is to man an object of awe; for although he has assumed our nature, nevertheless his humanity is as it were absorbed in the glory of his divinity, not by a transformation of substance, but of sentiments and affections, so that if he seem infinitely amiable, he is not less terrible. We praise not alone his mercy; this canticle would be imperfect; we must also extol his justice. Although he has learned to compassionate our miseries by the sufferings he has endured for us as our Redeemer, yet he

ceases not to be our judge. According to the Holy Scripture, our God is "a devouring and consuming fire." (*Deut.* ix. 3.) Therefore shall not the sinner, who is like to straw, and to the withered leaf, fear to approach him? It was necessary for our encouragement to give us an intercessor, who could by her prayers moderate the rigour of his judgments. Who can so well exercise this prerogative as his Blessed Mother? Whose intercession is more powerful with him? or whose compassion for us can be so great? In her there is nothing austere or terrible to human frailty; she is benignity itself. O blessed for ever be he who has given to us an advocate so powerful, a refuge so unfailing, and a mother so affectionate.

3rd Point. Consider—with what perfection the Blessed Virgin fulfils the office of intercessor, whether in offering her Divine Son for the salvation of mankind, or in offering herself to all the crosses she shall have to bear during her entire life for the same end. Already she begins to feel the sorrows of Calvary; and the remainder of her life shall be a continual martyrdom. She shall suffer each moment in her heart all that Jesus is to suffer one day in his sacred body; and the now predicted death of this beloved Son, always present to her mind, shall inflict as deep a wound on her heart, as if she beheld it with her eyes. Figure to yourself two altars, says Arnaud of Chartes, on one the heart of Mary, on the other the sacred body of Jesus Christ. The Son immolates his body, the Mother immolates her heart. Her consolation would be to unite the martyrdom of the body with that of the mind, and to mingle her blood with that of the Saviour, for the redemption of mankind; but this only belongs to the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world. Her zeal, nevertheless, co-operates for our reconciliation; the Son offers to the Eternal Father the vows of his mother in union with his own; the mother prays, the Son presents, and

the Father grants her prayer. Thus piety, charity, and mercy mutually embrace each other—the mother supplicating, the Son presenting his wounds, and the Father propitiously accepting these precious pledges of love. What can be learned in this school of sanctity, but meekness and mercy?

O Blessed Virgin, how powerful is thy aid for advancing our salvation! If thou deignest to supplicate in our behalf, we need no other intercessor with thy divine Son. For thou art the moving principle of all the heavenly spirits; thou no sooner speakest in our favour, than all the saints unite with thee, and join their prayers to thine. Speak then for us, O charitable advocate; for if thou art silent, who shall plead our cause? If thou dost abandon us, to whom shall we have recourse, O most holy Mother of God? We are lost if thou obtainest not our salvation, thou who art our refuge and our hope. For as respiration is an assured sign of the life of the body; so thy most holy name, breathed from the heart and lips of thy servants, is not only a sign, but a principle of that joy, hope, and life obtained through thy intercession.

FIFTH OF FEBRUARY.

On the Blessed Virgin as our Model in the contemplative and the active Life.

1st Point. Consider—how perfectly the Blessed Virgin fulfilled all the duties of the contemplative life. She above all pure creatures was inebriated with the abundance of the house of God. Her prayer partook more of the contemplation of the blessed, and the lights of heavenly glory, than of the obscurity of faith. Heaven was her dwelling-place, where she had centred all her thoughts and desires; she meditated the eternal

years; for her heart was entirely separated and disengaged from things temporal and perishable. Divine truth regulated the whole tenor of her life. Her book was purity of heart. Her mirror was the Divinity itself, in which she beheld the vanity of all creatures and her own nothingness. Devotion was her ornament, for all her application was to cultivate the interior spirit. In fine, the divine union was the centre of her repose; for God was the sole treasure of her heart. O admirable life! Life that is a foretaste of heaven! Life of continual prayer, which no earthly object ever could corrupt!

O that this cold and sensual heart, continually filled with the images of creatures, defiled with sin, and grovelling on the earth, were made to throb and burn with thy slightest influence; how soon would it relish all the truths of eternal life, and utterly detesting this miserable world, place all its happiness in God alone!

2nd Point. Consider—how faithfully the Blessed Virgin fulfilled all the duties of the active life. These consist in the exercise of the works of mercy, spiritual and corporal, and in the practice of all virtues. She practised the corporal works of mercy towards her beloved Son, serving him as her son and her Lord. She practised the spiritual works of mercy towards St. John, in contributing to the sanctification of his soul, and obtaining for him many graces. She united the exercise of both towards St. Elizabeth, assisting in her domestic occupations, and bearing the benediction of heaven to her house. She still daily exercises them towards mankind, procuring for them all benefits, spiritual and temporal, with inconceivable charity. In Mary, says St. Bernard, are united the sentiments of a compassionate, with the effective works of a beneficent charity. She provides for the necessities of all who invoke her; she is all to all; she opens her bosom of mercy to the whole world, to the end that all may

receive of her plenitude grace for grace. She is the temple of mercy open to all the miserable. All sinners find access to her; none are excluded.

O Blessed Virgin, when we speak of thy other virtues we proclaim thy praises; but when we extol thy mercy we congratulate ourselves. We admire thy humility, purity, wisdom, and all the graces of heaven, of which thou art the sanctuary. But thy mercy above all is sweet to the miserable, we embrace it with more tenderness, we remember it with more joy, we invoke it more frequently. The Lord is sweet, because he is my Lord and my mercy. Thou, O Mother of my Lord, art the royal gate of mercy, lead me to thy Son. Daughter of my Creator, conduct me to thy Father, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, present me to thy spouse.

3rd Point. Consider—the servants of the Blessed Virgin should learn from her example to unite the duties of the active life with those of the contemplative; that is to say, to pass from contemplation to action, and from action to contemplation; imitating the angels who ascend and descend by the ladder of Jacob; to ascend towards God by the exercise of prayer, to descend towards our neighbour by the exercise of good works. Let not attachment to the repose of contemplation make you forgetful of the spiritual interests of your neighbour, nor an inclination for active duties cause you to lose affection for prayer. Enter into the tabernacle, with Moses, to treat with God: come forth from it again to treat with your neighbour, and to labour for his salvation. Say with the spouse: I sleep, and my heart watches. I so repose that I cease not to listen. I spend not my leisure in idleness, but in learning the maxims of heavenly wisdom. I quit the tumult of human affairs, to occupy myself in divine affections. But after tasting this repose, listen to the voice of the spouse, who awakes you, saying: Arise, beloved soul, and come. Arise from the sweet sleep of contemplation,

prayer, and reading, and come quickly; that is to say, come to the service of your neighbour by the preaching of the Gospel and the example of good works. Remember, therefore, that the duties of Martha and Mary should not be separated. Mary is necessary to Martha, and Martha is praised for calling Mary to her assistance. By uniting them together you will approach unto God, which is to you the *one thing necessary*. How do we approach to God, says St. Augustin, if not by faith, by desire, and by charity? The two precepts of charity, that is, the love of God and our neighbour, are, as it were, the two feet by which we must advance towards God; beware of failing in either, which would cause you to lose him for eternity.

SIXTH OF FEBRUARY.

On Jesus curing the blind man of Bethsaida.

1st Point. Consider—in what manner Jesus cures the blind man, whom they led to him on entering Bethsaida. He takes him by the hand, and leads him out of the town; he anoints his eyes with spittle, and having laid his hands on him, inquires if he saw anything. He takes the hand of the blind man, with the same humility and charity that caused him to assume human nature in the Incarnation, and leads him by the hand as it were to conduct him towards heaven. He withdraws him from the town, because it is not in the crowd or tumult of the world that God communicates himself, and operates his wonders in souls. It is in solitude he illuminates them by his divine wisdom, and gives them relish of God, and understanding and love of his grandeur and beauty. In solitude he speaks to them, and asks what they see, demanding from them an account of the lights they receive, that he may bestow on them

others still more perfect. Make, with St. Catherine, a closet in your heart, where you may give yourself to prayer, and conversation with God. Then you will behold the wonders of God. He will replenish you with good thoughts, which will rejoice your mind and dilate your heart. Whoever desires to obtain his cure must first separate himself from idle and unquiet thoughts, irregular actions, vain and useless discourse, which dissipate the mind on exterior objects.

2nd Point. Consider—the Son of God having asked the blind man if he saw any thing, he replied: "I see men, as it were trees. walking." (*Mark*, viii. 24.) Such is the general state of mankind during this life: we have only an obscure and confused view, which makes objects appear what they are not in reality. Honours, pleasures, and riches seem to us great and desirable, although they are truly most vile and contemptible. On the contrary, humiliations, sufferings, and afflictions bear a melancholy and terrifying aspect, though, when viewed in the spirit of Jesus Christ, they become amiable and precious. Thus we see not *that which is*, because we rest too much on a delusive appearance, and we shall always remain in the blindness of error, until Jesus Christ shall lay his hand on our eyes, as he did to the blind man, and then our interior vision being perfectly restored, we shall see all things as he did, clearly and distinctly. Learn hence that God ordinarily acts in our regard according to the disposition of our hearts. If the preparation of our hearts is generous, he produces great effects; if it is mean and contracted, he operates but little; hence come the feint lights which so many receive in their ordinary devotions, in consequence of the little diligence and fervour which they bring—a defect which stops the course of God's graces, and prevents him from acting with all the liberality he would have done, if we opposed not his merciful designs.

3rd Point. Consider—the command given by the Son of God to the blind man after having restored him to sight: "Go into thy house, and if thou enter into the town, tell nobody." (*Mark*, viii. 26.) Learn that the graces of God are increased by the same means from which they derive their beginning. A soul that has been enlightened in retreat, should carefully exclude all idle thoughts, and shun all that could lead to dissipation of mind. She should preserve recollection, in order to contemplate him who has restored her to sight, and endeavour to see all things clearly; that is to say, the past, the present and the future. She should meditate attentively on what God has done for her in the past, the mercy he exercises towards her at the present, and the exact account he will demand of her in the future. She should examine what she has been, what she is, and what she shall be hereafter. She should reflect on the years she has passed, look forward to eternity, which awaits her, and seize on the present opportunity, which alone is in her power. This is to see all things clearly, penetrating them with the vision of faith, not with the imperfect light of the senses, which mistakes the shadow for the body and appearance for reality.

SEVENTH OF FEBRUARY.

On Jesus inquiring of his Disciples what men said of Him.

1st Point. Consider—the question which our Lord puts to his apostles, and their reply: "As he was alone praying, his disciples also were with him: and he asked them, saying: Whom do the people say that I am?" He well knew what men thought of him, but he would thus draw from his apostles a profession of their faith.

He requires not what the Pharisees, or the great ones of the world say of him; because those were blinded by the hatred and envy they bore him, and these were too much attached to earthly things, to care for those of heaven. But the people were more upright in their sentiments, and less biassed by passion; nevertheless, how far they were still removed from that esteem in which they ought to have held Jesus Christ! How do the apostles reply to the question of their master? "But they answered, and said: John the Baptist; but some say Elias; and others say that one of the former prophets is risen again." (*Luke*, ix. 19.) Be astonished at the ignorance of men, who judge so erroneously in what regards God and their salvation. Admire the charity of the Son of God and the care he takes to instruct his apostles, and elevate their minds to a knowledge of heavenly truths, both by conversation and by the prayers he pours forth to obtain for them divine lights. Imitate the humility and meekness he manifests on this occasion, in supporting with patience the little esteem in which he was held by men. Learn with what intention you should inquire what men say of you, not that you may hear your praises, but that you may know and correct your defects. Study to become all to all, to please all according to God. If you cannot content men, suffer meekly their vain discourse, their false reports, and sinister judgments, employing no other defence than humility and silence, remembering those words: "For how much each one is in thy eyes, so much he is, and no more." (*Imitat.* b. iii. 50.)

2nd Point. Consider—again our Lord demands of his disciples: "But whom do you say that I am?" (*Luke*, ix. 20.) And Simon Peter answering, said—"The Christ of God." (*Ibid.*) This admirable confession of faith was an effect of the Prayer that Jesus Christ had just offered, which, Saint Luke says, obtained for them all, and principally for St. Peter, a supernatural

light, by which they understood, more clearly than before, that he whom they saw a passable and mortal man, was at the same time truly the Son of God, equal to his Father in all things. Therefore our Lord replies to St. Peter—"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father, who is in heaven." (*Matt.* xvi. 17.) Reflect that the faith you received in baptism was a special favour of God, merited for you by Jesus Christ, and that it opens for you an infinite treasure of heavenly gifts, amongst which is the glorious title of *child of God.* How happy, to receive by faith and divine revelation, a grace which gives you a Father in heaven, who is God. How admirable, O Lord, are the lights you impart to your creatures, whether they regard the mysteries to be believed or the morality to be practised! A Man-God, a man born of a virgin; one God in three persons; a God expiring on a cross. O wonderful mysteries! To love our enemies, do good to those who injure us, rejoice in afflictions, hate and renounce ourselves. O admirable morality! Who could believe this if a God had not taught it? "Thy testimonies are exceedingly credible." (*Ps.* xcii. 5.) As the lights and maxims of faith elevate us to a divine excellence, so the sentiments of corrupt nature level us to the rank of the beasts. This lively faith and sublime knowledge of the divinity of Jesus Christ was, in the apostles, the foundation of their sanctity and the love they bore their divine Master. Such should also be the foundation of your perfection, and of all your hopes in the life to come.

3rd Point. Consider—the promises by which our Lord recompenses the faith of St. Peter. "And I say to thee: that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." (*Matt.* xvi. 18.) Faith in Jesus Christ is the foundation of his church: St. Peter is the first stone that Jesus Christ lays in this foundation. He

destines him, with his successors, to be the visible head of his kingdom on earth, even to the end of the world. He promises to his faith that priority which he gives to his love after the resurrection. Peter is therefore the Father of the faithful, in the law of grace, as Abraham formerly was under the ancient law. Those then who would secure their salvation must adhere to his faith, and that of his successors, because it is immovable. "Jesus Christ," says St. Cyril, in giving him the name of Peter, "would signify that he built his church on him, as on a firm rock." "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (*Matt.* xvi. 18.) By the gates are understood the strength of hell, which are the demons and their auxiliaries—that is to say, sinners, and sin itself, which draws souls into hell; and in this consists its strength. But in vain shall this infernal force assail the rock of Peter, for "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "If the enemies of the church," says St. Prosper, "attack her by persecution, they exercise her patience; if they attack her by heresy, they exercise her wisdom; in fine, in whatever manner they assault her, they give her the opportunity of exercising, but can never exhaust, her charity." Bless the divine Providence, that preserves to us this asylum of salvation, even to the consummation of ages. Be assured, that if you are faithful to God, all the power of hell cannot prevail against you, or make void the promises and designs of God in your regard. "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." (*Matt.* xvi. 19.) The Eternal Father has given to his Son the keys of the kingdom of heaven; the Son confides them to St. Peter, with absolute power to govern his church, —to bind and unbind, to condemn and absolve under his authority, without appeal. Bless God, who has left

in his church the power of forgiving sins, and of opening to you the gates of his heavenly kingdom; but remember, that if they are not opened before death, they must remain closed against you for eternity.

EIGHTH OF FEBRUARY.

On Jesus predicting his Death.

1st Point. Consider—"From that time Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the ancients, and scribes, and chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again." (*Matt.* xvi. 21.) Jesus discovers the secret of his death only to his chosen friends; moreover, he discovers it not until he has proved and fortified their faith, as he did that of his apostles, whom he elevated to the knowledge of his greatness before predicting his death, and discovering to them the value and happiness of his sufferings. On those only who are chosen among thousands this favour is conferred. "For this man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (*Acts*, ix. 15, 16.) I will teach him by experience the sublime knowledge of the cross. "In the cross is salvation; in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit. Behold the cross is all, and in dying to thyself all consists; and there is no other way to life, and to true internal peace but the way of the holy cross, and of daily mortification. If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end—to wit, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end." (*Imitat.* b. ii. c. 12.)

2nd Point. Consider—this lesson is so elevated, that St. Peter himself could not understand it, even after having penetrated the secret of his master's divinity; for he drew him aside, and lovingly reproved him, saying: "Lord, be it far from thee; this shall not be unto thee." (*Matt.* xvi. 23.) O weakness of the human heart! Though you are at times elevated to a high degree of prayer, and to sublime sentiments of the majesty of God, humble yourself profoundly; for after the movements of grace, those of flesh and blood will not fail to attack, and cause you to fall, if not on your own guard; for "nature is crafty, and draws away many; ensnares them and deceives them, and always intends herself for her end. But grace walks with simplicity, declines from all appearance of evil, offers no deceits, and does all things purely for God, in whom also she rests as in her last end. Grace studies the mortification of her own self, resists sensuality, seeks to be subject, covets to be overcome, aims not at following her own liberty, loves to be kept under discipline, and desires not to have the command over any one; but under God ever to live and be; and for God's sake is ever ready humbly to bow down herself under all human creatures." (*Imitat.* b. iii 54.)

3rd Point. Consider—the fault of St. Peter proceeded only from a natural tenderness towards his divine Master, which caused him to believe that the ignominy of the cross was contrary to the dignity of Jesus Christ; and nevertheless, reflect on the severity with which the Son of God replies: "But he turning said to Peter, 'Go after me, Satan; thou art a scandal unto me: because thou dost not relish the things that are of God, but the things that are of men.'" (*Matt.* xvi. 23.) How precious is the cross in the eyes of God, since he treats as Satan him that would oppose his sufferings! Fly the sentiments of men; they are opposed to those of God. If you fear the cross—if you

consider him a friend who would dissuade you from it—you relish not the things that are of God, you have not the spirit of Jesus Christ. Meditate the words of the Apostle: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. And whosoever shall follow this rule, peace be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. Let no man from henceforth be troublesome to me: for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body." (*Gal.* vi. 14, *et seq.*)

Pour forth on me, O Lord, the unction of thy holy grace, that fortified by the consideration of thy rewards, the example of thy saints—above all, that of our great model and instructor, Jesus Christ—I may henceforth rejoice in sufferings, to the end that having suffered for my divine Master, and having expired with him on the cross, thou mayest be mercifully pleased to receive me into the mansions of the blessed.

NINTH OF FEBRUARY.

On the Exhortation of Jesus to Mortification and Sufferings.

1st Point. Consider—"And calling together the multitude, with his disciples, he said to them: If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (*Mark*, viii. 34.) Jesus having severely reprehended St. Peter, assembled the people, together with his disciples, not to declare to them openly the secret of his death, but to propose three important maxims conformable to that mystery, which are three degrees that lead to the summit of the cross, and are necessary for all those who adore a crucified God. The first maxim is: "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself" He says, if any man

will, for he constrains us not to enter into his kingdom: no one is forced to receive a benefit, as it would then be no longer a grace. It is in your own power either to follow or not to follow his call; but if you will follow it, you must necessarily renounce all that is exterior—as parents, friends, pleasures, honours, and all that leads to sin. You must also renounce all that is interior—as your will, your judgment, and all your irregular inclinations. You must even renounce your life, and be ready at all times to lay it down, if necessary, for the divine service. Is such your disposition? Do you sincerely renounce all these things? Do you not flatter yourself with an apparent and superficial abnegation? That which we absolutely renounce we fly with aversion, and cannot endure to behold; that which you still love, and to the loss of which you are still sensible, has not been sincerely renounced.

2nd POINT. Consider—the second maxim: "If any man will follow me, let him take up his cross." It is not to abstain from all that is or may be evil: you must, moreover, embrace all that is or may be good. Our will has two principles of action—the one of flight and aversion; the other of love, complaisance, desire, and pursuit. The Son of God is not satisfied with the first—he also requires the second; and as in the second the most excellent degree is the love of contempt, sufferings, and martyrdom—whether exterior, by the destruction of the body, or interior, by the mortification of the passions and vicious inclinations, this is what he demands above all, and what he designates by the word *cross*, which was a torment at once cruel and infamous, but which he has rendered precious and honourable by embracing it for us. If, then, we would follow him, we, must necessarily suffer with him, after him, and for his sake. That man, says St. Leo, tends to Jesus Christ, by the way he himself has chosen, who endeavours to walk in the road of humiliation and suffering; a road

in which many labours and sorrows are to be encountered, many difficulties to be overcome.

My God, my Lord, and my King, wherever thou art, my Sovereign Master, I will remain inseparably united to thee. Nothing shall separate me from thee. Such should be your resolution, when meditating on Jesus crucified, remembering that you follow him under the standard of the cross. Suffer, therefore, with patience whilst engaged in the combat—joy shall succeed to labour; and if you partake in the cross of Jesus Christ, you shall also partake of his crown.

3rd Point. Consider—the third maxim: "If any man will follow me, let him take up his cross and follow me." It does not suffice to bear the cross, for it is the allotted portion of all men; but how few there are who bear it profitably!—to bear the cross with merit, we must bear it for the sake of Jesus Christ, and with his spirit. The love of Jesus is the sword of grief which carries patience to the soul which it pierces. Whatever you endure, remember that Jesus Christ has suffered before you. "O Lord," said David, "when my heart was in anguish thou didst exalt me on a rock. Thou hast conducted me; for thou hast been my hope, a tower of strength against the face of the enemy." (*Ps.* lx. 3, 4.) Jesus Christ is this tower of defence against our enemies. Lest you should be wounded by your enemy, fly into the tower. How shall you flee into it? You have it before you: remember Jesus Christ; enter into this tower; hide yourself in his sacred wounds—you shall there be in security. "For he hath hidden me in his tabernacle: in the day of evils he hath protected me in the secret place of his tabernacle. He exalted me upon a rock, and now he hath lifted up my head above my enemies. I have gone round, and have offered up in his tabernacle a sacrifice of jubilation. I will sing, and recite a psalm to the Lord. Hear, O Lord, my voice, with which I have cried to thee; have mercy on

me, and hear me. My heart hath said to thee: my face hath sought thee: thy face, O Lord, will I still seek. Turn not away thy face from me; decline not in thy wrath from thy servant. Be thou my helper; forsake me not; do not thou despise me, O God, my Saviour." (*Ps.* xxvi. 6, *et seq.*)

TENTH OF FEBRUARY.

On the Exhortation of Jesus to all Men to walk in the way of the Cross.

1st Point. Consider—"For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel, shall save it." (*Mark*, viii. 35.) The first motive which Jesus Christ proposes to lead us to a love of the cross is, that a sensual life causes eternal death to the soul, and that the mortification of the irregular appetites and passions ensures eternal life. The soul is at liberty to choose either a life that is natural, and according to the senses, or a life that is supernatural and divine. Whoever makes choice of one must renounce the other. Either the cross, with eternal life, or eternal death with the indulgence of the senses: choose which you will. And can you make a difficulty of suffering, and bearing your cross after Jesus Christ? This is your vocation, says the chief of the Apostles—you are called to the cross. In what path has the Son of God trodden in the course of his mortal life?—That of voluntary poverty, ignominy and pain. Behold the way which he has traced for you. Behold the cross, which he would have you carry daily. If you fear contempt, there is honour in following him even unto ignominy. If you fear suffering, there is pleasure in participating in his pains.

2nd Point. Consider—the second motive is the excellence and value of the soul, which is inestimable. "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (*Matt.* xvi. 26.) At present you can offer your tears and alms-deeds as the price of its ransom; but when it shall have quitted the body, there is no longer a resource—its loss is irreparable. Ah! how many are there who exchange for a trifle that soul which Jesus Christ has purchased at so dear a rate! How many sell for a vile gratification the soul redeemed by the blood of a God-man! The entire world is not equal in value to an immortal soul. Why has God created the world? For the temporal use of man. For what end has he created man? For his own glory. Consequently we are obliged to watch vigilantly over our own souls, that we may be able to restore them to their Creator, pure and spotless, at the hour of death. By how many titles is the soul of man consecrated to his God? It is his throne, his temple, his inheritance, and his treasure, in which he has placed his heart and his delights. "O Father of mercies! Father of the poor! What is man, that thou placest thy heart on him?" Ah! methinks I now comprehend the reason of all these favours: it is because where thy treasure is, there also is thy heart.

3rd Point. Consider—the third motive contained in these words: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he will render to every man according to his works." (*Matt.* xvi. 27.) And to the end you may be assured of this: "Amen I say to you, there are some of them standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (*Matt.* xvi. 28.) He speaks here of his transfiguration, which occurred six days after, wherein he displayed a ray of that beatitude which follows the cross, and the glory of his resur-

rection and ascension, when his disciples also commenced to taste the fruits of his passion. But this, nevertheless, was no more than a passing gleam of that glory which, at the day of judgment, he will communicate to those who have loved and followed the cross. What shall be the joy of those generous conquerors of the world and the flesh? What the confusion of carnal men, who live the life of beasts? Do you fear death? Reflect on the glory of him who shall triumph. Do you apprehend the cross? Consider the estimation in which it is held by the angels. Jesus Christ will render to every one according to their merits. He makes no distinction between the poor and the rich. He values not the persons, but the works. Then shall the mortification of the flesh be more glorious than if it had been pampered with delights. Then the coarse clothing shall seem beautiful, and the costly garment mean and loathsome. Then the poor cottage shall be more esteemed than the gilded palace. Then a pure conscience shall give more joy than learned philosophy. Then the contempt of riches shall outweigh all the treasures of the earth. Then an austere life and severe penance shall be more agreeable than all the pleasures of the earth. "Learn now to suffer in little things, that hereafter you may avoid what is great." (*Imit.* b. i, 24.)

O Sovereign Judge of the living and the dead! remember thou art also our Saviour. If our sins have provoked thy justice, thy own wounds plead in our behalf. Look, then, upon the wounds thou hast suffered, and the blood thou hast shed to efface our sins. We beseech thee, by those precious pledges of salvation, to pardon our sins, and impart to our hearts the true spirit of penance.

ELEVENTH OF FEBRUARY.

On the reasons why Jesus chose the Cross.

1st Point. Consider—"And they spoke of his decease that he should accomplish in Jerusalem." (*Luke*, ix. 39.) The first reason that justifies the proceeding of God towards his elect, in predestinating them to the cross, and which manifests the excess of his love towards them, is taken from the debt which they owed to his justice. For man having sinned as did the angels, deserved, like them, to be condemned to eternal fire, if the Saviour of the world had not changed, by his infinite mercy and the merit of his death, this miserable eternity into momentary sufferings, as the apostle says. Should we not hold this disposition as a singular favour, adore the sovereign goodness of God, submit to the sentence with humble acknowledgment, and accept willingly the crosses of this life, in order to avoid everlasting torments? If you seriously reflect on this reason, and if you conceive what it is to be condemned to eternal flames, you will never complain of the transitory sufferings of the present time.

2nd Point. Consider—the second reason is founded on divine love, which is in one respect the life of the soul, and in another, the principal tribute that God requires from us. Herein the goodness of God is admirable, who demands from us only that which we can possess by his grace, and which we can return to him with sensible pleasure and sweetness. For what can be more sweet than to love, or more reasonable than to love our sovereign good? Now, love is never more strongly demonstrated than by suffering for him whom we love. It is easy to love God when he replenishes us with favours and graces; but when he sends us the cross, it is then we can prove whether we love him or

not. Thus our Saviour entering into the world, and desiring to testify his love towards his Father and his brethren, has preferred the cross to an infinity of other means much less painful; requiring therefore of us a reciprocal love, should he not present to us the cross, which is the most sensible mark of the love he bears us, and of that which we should return for his goodness. O Christian soul, remember that your divine spouse would prove by his sufferings the intensity of his love. His appearance in glory on Thabor was but momentary, yet even in that moment he spoke but of his death; he bore the cross his entire life, from the stable of Bethlehem unto Calvary: should you love him with any other love? Was it not such a love that impelled St. Ignatius, the martyr, to conjure all creatures, even savage beasts, to torment and tear him, because by suffering alone he desired to manifest the love he bore to Jesus Christ? Was it not the same that drew from others these ardent exclamations: "Either to suffer or to die. Either the cross or the stroke of death; for I cannot live, unless to suffer: I cannot remain without a wound, seeing thee wounded and torn on the cross."

3rd Point. Consider—the third reason is taken from our spiritual maladies, the source of which is self-love, an evil so universal that no one can claim exemption, so obstinate that nothing less than extreme violence and the severest treatment can effect its cure. What then should a charitable physician do who loves the salvation of his patients, but to dispense unto them sufferings, as salutary remedies for the present, and preservations for the future, especially against pride, an enemy so formidable that it causes the greatest saints to tremble? For there is no means more powerful than affliction and suffering to humble the proud. Affliction is the stone that beats down this giant, and delivers us from a most dangerous enemy; which cast the angels from heaven and man from paradise. The

fourth reason is taken from the example of Jesus Christ. For if the Son of God, who is the increated wisdom, has chosen for himself the way of the cross whereby to enter into his glory, can we doubt that it is the most advantageous for us? Has he not placed all our spiritual good in the cross? "Salvation is in the cross, life is in the cross; in the cross is salvation from our enemies, the unction of grace, the strength of the soul, the joy of the spirit, the perfection of virtue, and the highest degree of sanctity." (*Imit* b. ii. 12.) But although all these advantages were not to be found in the way of the cross, and that by walking in one less difficult, we should arrive at an equal glory in heaven, yet this sole consideration, that Jesus Christ has trodden the thorny path of suffering, should oblige us to prefer the same, to the end we may be more assimilated to our Divine Head. This resemblance is the most signal honour and advantage which his love can confer upon us. "Take up your cross, therefore, and follow Jesus, that you may live with him eternally. He is gone before thee, carrying his cross; and he died for thee upon the cross, that thou mayest also bear thy cross, and love to die on the cross." (*Ibid.*)

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Jesus is sold to the Jews.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus having ended his discourse, said to his disciples: You know that the Pasch will be in two days, and that the Son of Man shall be delivered up to be crucified." (*Matt.* xxvi. 2.) He has fulfilled the office of teacher, he now enters upon that of priest and victim; and as he had given us the treasure of his doctrine, in pointing out the way of salvation, he will now give us that of his blood, to open the

gate of heaven. St. Paulinus says, "He is himself the victim of his priesthood." His life is the victim of the world, and the priest who immolates is his own love! What return will you make for such a benefit? Will you make a difficulty of giving your life, which is but a breath of wind, for that of a God, which is of inestimable value?

O Jesus, I consecrate to thee my heart, soul, and life, as a perpetual sacrifice. I desire to be the devoted victim of thy glory; to be consumed in the fire of contrition; to expiate my sins in the fire of love; to acknowledge thy goodness; and, in the fire of sufferings, to imitate thy example, and render honour to thy cross.

2nd Point. Consider—"Then the chief priests and the ancients of the people consulted together, that by deceit they might apprehend Jesus, and put him to death." (*Matt.* xxvi. 4.) Jesus returns from Bethania to Jerusalem; and whilst he meditates the work of our redemption, treating of it with his Eternal Father, the Jews assembled to deliberate how by stratagem they may surprise and put him to death. His wisdom discovers their evil designs, and his power could easily frustrate them; but his goodness takes advantage of their malice and from the greatest of evils draws forth our supreme good. Learn from the generosity of your Master, that the triumph of virtue is to do good in return for injuries. Learn, again, to distrust the vain promises of the world, and the suggestions of the flesh, and of your own heart. Your passions, senses, and irregular inclinations hold intelligence with the enemies of Jesus, to crucify him in your heart: beware then of adhering to, or suffering them to corrupt you by their importunate solicitation.

O my Saviour! shall I be so base as to betray thee? or so miserable as to conspire against thy life? Alas! how often have I been thus guilty! The recollection

of the past makes me tremble for the future. Forget, O Lord, my malice, and have pity on my weakness; permit me not to violate the fidelity I owe thee, since thou art the author of my life; grant that I may lose all, rather than consent to thy death.

3rd Point. Consider—"What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they promised to give him thirty pieces of silver." (*Matt.* xxvi. 15.) Infamous traffic! Judas sells that which he has lost; the Jews purchase at the value of a slave the priceless life of Jesus. God of infinite greatness, how low art thou in the estimation of man! and how precious is man in thine! Blind of heart! you offer thirty pieces of silver to purchase Jesus. What will you give me, and I will deliver him to you? I ask not thirty pieces of silver: I will be content with two—the love of God and of your neighbour. Is this too much? I will ask but one—your heart will suffice. Do you desire to have him without cost? He will give you himself for nothing. Come to the tribunal of penance, he will give you his blood. Approach his altar, he will give you his body. Humble yourself in his presence, he will give you his heart. The lowliness of humility is the price of his love.

O Lord, I acknowledge that in giving myself, I give thee nothing; but for this nothing thou wilt give me all. Accept, in thy mercy, nothingness for all things; and, if I may so speak, accept all for all, to the end being all thine, thou mayest be all mine. Amen.

MONDAY.

Jesus celebrates the Passover with his Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—"Where wilt thou that we prepare the passover?" (*Matt.* xxvi. 17.) It is in your

heart Jesus desires to make this paschal feast. The disciples he sends to prepare it are faith and love. The Cenacle of Sion was only the figure of this, as the paschal lamb was but the shadow of his sacred body. O how pure, how generous, how exalted above all that is terrestrial, should be the heart that is honoured by the reception of such a guest! How holy should be the soul that is nourished with so precious a food!

Divine Lamb, how happy are those whom thou invitest to thy table! But who shall dare to hope this honour? How shall this heart lodge thee, whom heaven and earth cannot contain?

My son, I invite little ones to my table, because my delight is to make them great Dilate thy heart. and I will fill it. Thou shalt not change me into thee, but I will change thee into me

2nd Point. Consider—"The Master saith, my time is near at hand; with thee I will make the pasch with my disciples." (*Matt.* xxvi. 18.) The day of communion, on which he gives you the Bread of Life, is peculiarly dear to Jesus Christ. He then takes a mystic life in the sacrament. and a life of love in your heart. Love it therefore above all others as his birth-day. Love it as the day of your espousals, and the joy of your heart. Love it as the centre of his repose and your desires; for the object of all the labours of his life, is to unite himself to you in the holy communion; and the fulfilment of your desires should be to unite yourself to him by love.

Come, O thou God of my heart! come, take thy repose, and accomplish all my desires. I sigh after the blessed moment that will unite me inseparably to thee. Come, my beloved, and do not delay. Either draw me to thee, or come thyself to me. Say to my soul, "My time is near at hand."

3rd Point. Consider—"With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer." (*Luke*, xxii. 15.)

Jesus, before his passion, accomplishes the most ardent desires of his whole life: he fulfils the ancient law, and institutes the law of love. He institutes this in establishing the Christian passover; he fulfils that, in celebrating the passover of the Jews. Jesus is the end of the law; he does not destroy, but fulfils and gives it the utmost perfection, observing it unto death. Do you desire to terminate your life happily? Imitate your Saviour; observe his law, and participate in his divine mysteries. Happy they who can say at the hour of death: I have received my God, and I have accomplished all his designs.

Grant, my Saviour, that at the hour of death I may receive thy sacred body, and that thy holy will may be perfectly accomplished in me. Be thou my guide, my end, my pasch, and my passage from time to eternity. Let my heart be as the ark of the testament, containing the manna and the law. Thus shall I pass in security through the shadow of death to the light of glory.

TUESDAY.

Jesus washes the Feet of his Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came from God, and goeth to God: He riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments, and having taken a towel, girded himself. After that he putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." (*John*, xiii. 3, 4.) Who would not be touched with devout astonishment, to see him before whom the pillars of heaven tremble, kneeling at the feet of poor fishermen, washing them with his sacred hands, and kissing them with his divine lips; not even excepting

those of the traitor Judas? It is love that presses him thus low; this admirable humility, which impels to an action so sublime, is produced by charity the most intense. The greater he is the more he abases himself. He knows that his Father has placed all things in his power, even the traitor whom he could destroy by a word: but mercy triumphs over justice. This divine mercy, not able to soften a heart that obduracy has steeled, falls at his feet, and washes them with his tears. O hardness of an impenitent heart! O meekness of an humble God! Where can pride hide itself in the brightness of such an example?

2nd Point. Consider—Peter said to him: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" (*John*, xiii. 6.) St. Peter, surprised at the humility of his master, is seized with a holy fear. Considering on one side the abyss of his own nothingness, on the other that of the majesty of the Son of God: penetrated with sentiments of his baseness, he exclaims—"Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Thou who art God, and I who am nothing—thou who art my sovereign Lord, and I who am thy slave—thou who art the Holy of Holies, and I who am a sinner. What would be the astonishment of the Apostle at the foot of the cross, when Jesus would have washed him with the tears of his eyes, the water from his side, and the blood that flowed from his entire body? What should a Christian say when he comes forth from the laver of penance where the Son of God effaces the stains of our souls in these three precious streams Can he refuse him the tears of gratitude in return as long as he lives?

O Lord, open the eyes of my soul, and dispel the darkness that surrounds me. Grant me so to penetrate the abyss of thy greatness and my own nothingness, that my pride being buried therein may never rise again.

3rd Point. Consider—"If I wash thee not, thou

shalt have no part with me." (*John*, xiii. 8.) What a menace! To be separated from Jesus! to have no part with Jesus! this is a misfortune the saints feared more than death, hell, or all imaginable sufferings. O what purity is required to approach Jesus! Since the least irregular affection deprives us of his familiarity in prayer, his favours in holy communion, and the enjoyment of his presence in heaven, where we can never enter until it is effaced in his blood! Thinkest thou O fervent disciple, that being exempt from mortal sin, thou needest not be washed. Withered trees are not watered at the root, but only fertile plants. Jesus instructs thee, that unless thou lovest abjection, and holdest thyself united with his merits, thou canst not produce good fruit.

O Jesus! author and lover of purity, I beseech thee to wash not only my feet, but also my hands and head Purify my thoughts, my affections, my actions, to the end there may be nothing to prevent my approach and union with thee in the adorable eucharist.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus discovers the Treason of Judas.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus having said these things, he is troubled in mind." (*John*, xiii. 21.) The malice of Judas, who has received him unworthily, so afflicts the tender and loving heart of Jesus, that sorrow constrains him to break forth in these words: "One of you shall betray me." (*Matt.* xxvi. 21.) His wisdom discovers the perfidy of this miserable man. His goodness pronounces the awful menace—"Wo to him by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed; it were better for that man that he had never been born," (*Matt.* xxvi. 24.) His justice smites him,

although with regret, in abandoning him to Satan and his own passions "What thou doest, do quickly." (*John*, xiii. 27.) How dangerous to approach Jesus Christ unworthily! This bread of life is fatal to the unworthy receiver! How true, that the greatest benefits of God, if abused, become the most grievous punishments.

O my Saviour, far from fearing lest thy wisdom discover and manifest to me the malice of my heart, I humbly beg of thee so necessary a knowledge. I fear not the warnings and menaces of thy goodness; but I fear lest thy justice abandon me to myself, in punishment of my ingratitude.

2nd POINT. Consider—"The disciples therefore looked one upon another, doubting of whom he spoke." (*John*, xiii. 22.) The words of Jesus enter the hearts of the faithful disciples as a sword of fire, piercing them with a most sensible sorrow, yet that of Judas remains impenetrable. The innocent tremble, while the criminal stands unabashed; but his guilt cannot be concealed. Blinded by malice, his effrontery only serves to hasten his execrable design, and his ultimate ruin. Pure souls tremble at the shadow of sin; they fear to lose Jesus—they grieve to be deprived of his presence—they regret that he is little loved, and so much offended. The fear of the Lord is a fruit of the holy communion. Jesus is hidden under the sacramental species, as the thunderbolt in the cloud. He impresses the saints with fear, but strikes with obduracy the sinner who receives him, like Judas, without reverence or sorrow for sin.

O my Saviour! worldlings place their innocence in the concealment of their crimes, and their courage in despising thy judgments. As for me, thy fear is my hope, and the knowledge of my offences a chastisement, or rather a favour, which I love. Grant that thy holy fear may so occupy my heart, that sin may no longer find place therein.

3rd Point. Consider—"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter beckoned to him, and said to him: 'Who is it of whom he speaketh?'" (*John*, xiii. 23.) Behold how St. John clings to the bosom of his Master, whilst Judas shrinks from that throne of holiness. The heart of Jesus is between them, as the diamond which attracts one and repels the other. How different the state of these two disciples! One enjoys God, and reposes on the heart of Jesus, as the source of true delight; the other is possessed by the evil spirit, who tears him from the bosom of his Master, to make him the most miserable of slaves. The one brings to the holy communion an angelic purity; therefore the Son of God caresses, and is to him a paradise in this adorable mystery; the other approaches with an envenomed heart, and finds therein his reprobation and his hell.

O God of all purity preserve me from the misfortune of this faithless Apostle. When I present myself at this heavenly banquet, my unworthiness terrifies; and when I withdraw, my indigence presses, and leaves me no repose. I am poor, and thou art my only good. I must therefore approach thee, since my soul cannot subsist without this divine food.

THURSDAY.

Jesus reproves his Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—"And there was also a strife amongst them, which of them should seem to be the greater." (*Luke*, xxii. 24.) The fall of Judas has caused the Apostles to tremble, yet it has not quelled their ambition, nor banished the spirit of the world from their hearts. They have seen Jesus, who is the glory of heaven, at their feet—they have received him

into their hearts—and nevertheless they still seek after worldly honour; and even the death of their divine Master, which should overwhelm them with sorrow, furnishes a subject of contention, as to who amongst them shall take his place. Be astonished at the weakness of the Apostles, whose hearts still entertain thoughts of pride, even at the moment they are about to lose all, in losing the Son of God. Fly vanity, which insinuates itself into the greatest minds. A point of honour in the mind of a religious, is an enemy in the camp of Jesus Christ, which produces great disorder if not promptly banished.

My Redeemer, at thy birth thou broughtest peace to men, and didst refer all glory to thy father. Grant me that peace, and let me behold thee in my brethren, rendering to them, for thy sake, the honour due to their peculiar station; never preferring myself to any, because thou alone deservest to be preferred in all things.

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus said to them: The kings of the gentiles lord it over them; and they that have power over them are called beneficent. But you not so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger, and he that is the leader, as he that serveth." (*Luke*, xxii. 25, 26.) What opposition between the spirit of Jesus Christ and that of the world! Worldlings would domineer and exalt themselves above all. They have little regard for those subject to them, provided they can maintain their power; and if they do good, it is only through vain glory. They follow in this the movement of the spirit that governs them, and say, like Lucifer, I shall ascend on high. Do you desire to be great before Jesus Christ? Become as the least. If your state raise you above others, let humility place you beneath them—charity should only exercise power in serving and rendering good offices to others. Thus has the Son of God acted

in your regard. He is become your servant, though he is your Sovereign Lord; he has not spared even his own flesh and blood, which he has given for your food. "Why should you exalt yourself," says St. Augustin, "since God has humbled himself for your sake?" You are ashamed, perhaps, to imitate the humility of man: at least you cannot disdain to follow that of God.

Let worldlings imitate the pride of their king. I will acknowledge no master but thee, my humbled Jesus. Henceforth I will not fear to humble myself, and take with thee the lowest place, which is now ennobled by thy choice.

3rd Point. Consider—"And you are they who have continued with me in my temptations: And I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom: That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and may sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (*Luke*, xxii. 28.) With what mildness must the wounds of the soul be treated! How true that correction, in order to be useful, must be devoid of bitterness! Incomparable sweetness of the Son of God! How powerful his words to heal the vanity of his disciples! Listen to the voice of the Incarnate Wisdom. You, he says, have remained with me in my temptations—have persevered with me in poverty, persecution and contempt. Will you now be false to yourselves? Will you, for a point of honour, lose all the fruit of your merits? It is not in these worldly precedences that true greatness consists which you should esteem. If you desire glory, let the thrones I prepare for you in heaven be the object of your ambition. Think of acquitting yourselves worthily of the functions I shall give you in my church, and labour with invincible courage in the conquest of the world. Consider the glory of that day, when, seated at my side, you shall judge the universe. Reflect on that happy eternity, where you shall be as kings, eating at my table,

and drinking of the torrent of my delights in unalterable repose. Let such be the object of your care and ambition; not those vain pretensions, which can only serve to deprive you of your crown.

Engrave these truths in my heart, O Incarnate Word! Teach me the difference between a truly noble spirit and the spirit of pride. The spirit of pride, my son, is low and mean, because it rises not above that which is terrestrial. That spirit alone can be esteemed generous which is truly humble, because it is elevated by a glorious contempt of the honours of the world, and tends directly to God, who is the source of true greatness.

FRIDAY.

Jesus establishes the law of Charity.

1st Point. Consider—"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another." (*John*, xiii 34.) Jesus, the most amiable of masters, having banished the spirit of the world from the hearts of his disciples, employs the last moments of his life to engrave upon them the law of love, the sweetest and most admirable of all laws. With incomparable tenderness he says: My little children, I am on the point of returning to my Father. Love me constantly, breathe only after my love, and let not death itself separate us, since it is for you I die. But if you love me, love one another for my sake. This is the most ardent wish of my heart, the fundamental ordinance of my kingdom, the new law that I have brought from heaven, because sin hath banished it from the earth. I received it from my Father, and I transmit it to you as my last testament. Revive it in the hearts of men; unite them all with me; unite them with each other, not by chains of iron, but by the bonds of charity. O how sweet is the empire

of Jesus Christ, since it is an empire of love! But say not you love him, if you love not your brother, who is his substitute. Can you love him if you love not what he loves? Can you love him if you receive not with respect a law conceived in the heart of a God, published by his lips, written in his blood, and by his pierced hands? Can you resist him whose command is more a benefit than a law?

Give me, O Lord, a new heart, that I may observe thy commandment. My son, this law, which has regenerated the world, shall also renew a right spirit within you.

2nd Point. Consider—"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." (*John*, xiii. 6.) Jesus is not only the legislator, but also the model of perfect love. The ancient law says, you shall love your neighbour as yourself; and the new law, love your neighbour as Jesus Christ has loved you. Consider in this admirable model the charity you are to imitate. It should be universal: for the charity of Jesus Christ embraces heaven and earth; it excludes neither friend nor enemy. It should be strong as death. You should deem yourself happy to lay down your life for your brethren, as Jesus Christ has given his life for you. It should be exalted as heaven; you should love them only for God. He that loves his neighbour in a spirit of sanctity, what does he love but God, says St. Augustin: he seeks not his own interest, he expects no return. He loves them not as men, but as the children of God, brethren and disciples of Jesus Christ.

O my Saviour, how narrow is my heart compared with thine! Confounded as I am, my consolation is, that thou who beholdest me canst redress all my miseries. Give me, O Lord, that which thou commandest, and command what thou pleasest.

3rd Point. Consider—"By this shall all men know

that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (*John*, xiii. 35.) The kings of the earth are recognised by their sceptre and diadem, says St. Chrysostom; the disciples of Jesus Christ, by their fraternal charity. Behold how they love, said the Pagans, speaking of the primitive Christians: behold how they are ready to die for one another. Neither miracles, nor prophecies, nor ecstacies, distinguish the children of God from the children of darkness: charity is their sceptre and crown; their greatest ornament, and the most certain mark of their dignity. If you have not charity and forbearance towards your brethren, you are not a disciple of the Son of God. Charity is the school of this excellent master, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. If you quit this school, or do not persevere therein, you lose your crown. You cannot enter the light of glory without passing through the flames of charity.

Whence comes it, my adorable Saviour, that so good a master hath so unprofitable a disciple? Is thy doctrine so obscure or so difficult to practise? Ah! what can be sweeter than the name of charity, or more amiable than its effects? Undoubtedly, it is because I want that light of the understanding, and generosity of heart, which thou impartest to thy faithful disciples who obey thy will and fulfil thy precepts.

SATURDAY.

Jesus predicts the fall of St. Peter.

1st POINT. Consider—"Simon, Simon, Satan hath demanded thee that he may sift thee as wheat." (*Luke*, xxii. 31.) It is an act of wisdom to foresee evil, and an effect of goodness to warn those whom it menaces. Jesus does both with regard to his disciples. As he is

infinitely wise, he cannot be ignorant of their weakness, and he is too merciful to conceal it from them. He foretells that all shall be scandalized in him, and as St. Peter expressed more resolution than the rest, in order to moderate his fervour by a salutary fear, he tells him that Satan had demanded him. How important is this warning! how salutary this fear! how true that those who are most courageous when peril is remote, are often the weakest when it presents itself! Reflect hereon, and be persuaded that with the aid of grace you can vanquish temptation, but that you cannot be secure from its attacks. If the present temptation cease, be assured that another will soon follow. Be therefore, as St. Bernard says, always on your guard. Follow the advice of wisdom: "prepare your soul for temptation;" distrust yourself; fear is your security.

If the pillars of heaven are shaken, what may I not fear who am as dust before the wind? Open, O Lord, my eyes, that I may see my danger; that I may know my own weakness, and the strength of the enemy who unceasingly persecutes me; lest I sleep in death, and Satan, triumphing in my misfortune, say: He is mine, I have vanquished him.

2nd Point. Consider—"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not fail." (*Luke*, xxii. 32.) This amiable Saviour, who warns us of danger, would, himself, be our safe-guard. He assures St. Peter that he has prayed for him, teaching us that he is the refuge to which we must have recourse in all our necessities. O divine consolation! Jesus prays for me whilst I am tempted. His sacred wounds demand for me the succour of his eternal Father. Jesus opens his divine heart to hide me therein, and save me from the power of my enemies. Courage, my soul; as long as we are in this exile, we shall have to fly from the snares of Satan; but let us fly to Jesus, he is our refuge; and should our enemies press on us, let us call upon him who is our support and our security.

The God of heaven is my protector: what shall I fear upon earth? The powers of darkness, the perversity of men, afflictions, maladies, and death, are under heaven; but thou art above all, thy empire is absolute over all these. Be thou my buckler to defend me from the assaults of the enemies by whom I am surrounded.

3rd Point. Consider—"Lord, I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death." (*Luke*, xxii. 33.) St. Peter considers not his weakness, but follows the movement of his heart. Whence you may learn to distrust your own dispositions, however good they may seem: self-love has such subtile foldings, and glides so imperceptibly even into the best actions, that the greatest saints have been deceived by it. How many in the fervour of devotion say to our Lord: I am ready to die for thee. But the Son of God, who searches the heart, knows the weakness and perversity of their will

O Lord, I am not surprised at my weakness, because without thee I am nothing; but I lament that being so weak, I should depend on my own strength, forgetful of thee who art my support. My son, there are three classes of persons whose salvation is in great danger: the first presume on themselves, taking complacency in their supposed virtues; the second presume on my goodness, lingering in their tepidity; the third suffer themselves to be overwhelmed by the weight of their miseries. Fly those three rocks, live under my protection, and you shall be secure.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

Jesus consoles his Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—"Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me."

(*John*, xiv. 1.) When you are afflicted, remember there is a Jesus in heaven, who is witness of your sufferings. Re-animate your faith. Reflect that he is your sovereign good, of whom no one can deprive you; that, provided he remain with you, you can lose nothing, because in him you possess all things. Whilst yet an infant, his divine countenance consoled those who had the happiness to behold him. Let us go to the Son of Mary, said they, he will soothe our pains. If you believe him glorious in heaven, why has not faith the same effect on *you*, since the eyes of the spirit are more noble than those of the body? Why is your heart troubled, he says? You have lost a friend:—do you not believe that I am the best of friends? You have been deprived of worldly wealth:—am not I your treasure? Your health is impaired:—do you not know I am the physician of soul and body? You fear death:—do you believe that I am the life? And if you believe it, why do you tremble?

2nd Point. Consider—"In my Father's house there are many mansions. If not I would have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you; I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be. And whither I go you know, and the way you know." (*John*, xiv. 2.) If sadness and sorrow tempt your constancy, raise your eyes to heaven, that place of eternal delight where Jesus awaits you. This world is but your exile, and you cannot hope for repose until you arrive at the term of your pilgrimage. Patience yet a little while: for a momentary labour, you will have an eternal recompense. Fear not that your sins will exclude you from the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In his house there are many mansions: one for the innocent, another for the penitent: one for souls of great courage, another for the less heroic. Jesus, who is the king and master, has given a place to the good thief

among the princes of his court; and he also prepares one for you, which will be so much the more exalted, as you will have suffered more in his service. Do not suppose that he can forsake you; this is impossible whilst you suffer for love of him. St. Paul says, he has promised never to forsake you. Confide in his word: diffidence alone can prevent the effect of his promises. Hope, and it shall be given to you. "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (*John*, xiv. 13.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (*John*, xiv. 21.) Behold the most pure and sweet consolation of the afflicted. Love, and you will no longer complain of suffering. The love of Jesus is the sovereign remedy of every evil, without which life would be more intolerable than death. If it is a degree of beatitude to love the Son of God, what shall it be to be loved by him, by his Father, and the Holy Ghost? If he who has created all things love you, say what harm can befall, or what good can be wanting to you? What happiness to be loved by him who is arbiter of life and death! who can decide our eternal happiness or misery! to whom it is as impossible to condemn those who love him, as to save those who have forfeited his grace!

Lord, what wilt thou give to those who love thee For, sinner as I am, I desire to be of that number. Teach me, O Lord, what is the recompense thou givest to thy friends, to the end I may seek, and seeking find, love, and possess it. My son, "if any love me, I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him." (*John*, xiv. 21.) Listen, faithful souls, who sigh after the kingdom of heaven, who are afflicted for the absence of Jesus: if you suffer with him for a moment, you shall see him for ever in his glory; and if you weep

a little while for his love, you shall enjoy with him eternal felicity.

MONDAY.

Jesus continues his Discourse.

1st Point. Consider—"But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I; arise, let us go hence." (*John*, xiv. 31.) "Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to drinking the chalice of his passion." (*Imitat.* b. ii. 11.) But thou, faithful soul, be ready to lose all, to suffer all, rather than be separated from him. He is the vine, you the branch; without him you cannot bear fruit; without him your labours and sufferings are unprofitable; and you become dry, dead, and only fit for the fire. For one of those two must be the condition of the vine—either fruit or fire. Either Jesus Christ or hell. Choose which you will; there is no medium. Without him all your hopes are vain, your prayers inefficacious. The grace of Jesus is the principle of your spiritual life and fertility. Without him you cannot glorify God! for the glory of God is, that you bear much fruit, and you cannot bear it unless united with Jesus Christ. Without him you cannot be loved by God, for he can only love you as belonging to his divine Son. In fine, your only solid joy is to be filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ, as it is his delight to replenish your heart with himself, who is its sovereign good.

O God of my heart! sole object of my love, sweet Jesus! whither shall the soul go that is so unfortunate as to be separated from thee? To be separated from thee is hell; to be united to thee is paradise. Dwell then, with me, O Lord, who hearest the secret cry of

my heart, which sighs after thee, who alone canst satisfy all its desires.

2nd Point. Consider—"But I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." (*John*, xvi. 7.) Although Jesus withdraws his sensible presence, you can still preserve a precious union with him. The secret bond which unites your heart with his is the Holy Ghost—the gift of Jesus suffering and triumphant, a fruit of the cross, and a present from heaven. Jesus crucified has merited for you the Holy Spirit: Jesus glorified has sent him from on high He comes to teach you to enter into these two states of suffering and of triumph. During this mortal life your union must be with Jesus crucified; after death it will be with Jesus glorified. Now, the Holy Ghost unites you with Jesus by conformity of mind, because he is the spirit of truth; by conformity of desire, because he is the spirit of love; by conformity of action, because he is the spirit of sanctity; and by conformity of suffering, because he is the spirit of Christ crucified. One day he will unite you by a conformity of glory, because he is the spirit of Christ glorified.

Most sweet Jesus, vouchsafe to send forth thy divine spirit into my heart, that, inebriated with thy love, I may seek neither pleasure nor repose but in thee, who art the source of true delight, alike desirable on the cross and on the throne, in the bosom of thy Father and in the crib of Bethlehem; in the tomb, and in heaven, where thou art eternally blessed by all the saints.

3rd Point. Consider—"These things have I spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world." (*John*, xvi. 33.) Peace and union with Jesus Christ and with the world are incompatible. If you desire to be united with the Son of God, you must be an enemy to the world, loving what

it hates, and hating what it loves. Envy not its vain joys: they will soon be changed into eternal torments. The sufferings which the world threatens are flowers that produce the fruit of beatitude. Why do you not gather them to form your crown? Sufferi are the livery of Jesus Christ: is it not honourable to the servant to be clothed in the livery of his Lord? They are the mark of your predestination, and the portion of the children of God. Can you desire a better inheritance than that of the saints? Fear not to enter into combat with the world; it is a vanquished enemy. Your confidence should increase with your difficulties, for the Son of God has acquired for you strength to gain the victory.

My Lord and Master, it is honourable to suffer for thy glory, and in imitation of thee. May I rather die than abandon thee, or leave thee to carry thy cross alone. May all my thoughts and affections be henceforth united to thee; may my heart be inflamed with thy love, and my soul thirst after thee, the fountain of life.

TUESDAY.

Jesus addresses his heavenly Father.

1st Point. Consider—"These things Jesus spoke, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said: Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." (*John*, xvii. 1.) Jesus calls the hour of his passion the hour of glory, because by his death he shall be glorified, in manifesting himself to the world as the true Son of God, and obliging mankind to render him the homage due to their God and Saviour. But he only demands this glory of his Father, after accomplishing the work he had given him. Learn hence, that no one

has a right to the glory of Paradise, unless he can say: I have fulfilled the work of God; I have attained that degree of sanctity to which he has called me. If you cannot say this with truth, at least begin without delay to labour for that eternal recompense. There are moments especially marked by Divine Providence, which should be considered moments of glory and of salvation. First, when the spirit of Jesus knocks at your heart, and solicits a return of love. Secondly, when the spirit of darkness seeks to withdraw you from the fidelity you owe your Saviour. Thirdly, when the Son of God presents an occasion of rendering him some considerable service. Fourthly, when he presents the cross, and dispenses to you a thorn from his crown—that is, any humiliation or sensible mortification. In those moments of grace, raise without delay your heart to your heavenly Father, and say with his divine Son: this is the hour of my happiness, and the glory that I should render to my Master. O my God, glorify thy servant in making him victorious, that he may glorify thee, in referring all the honour of the combat to thy power and goodness.

2nd POINT. Consider—"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; because they are thine." (*John*, xvii. 9.) Jesus prays to his eternal Father for all his elect. As he loves them with a love of preference, a love full of tenderness and strength, in dying he recommends them with a particular affection. What does he demand for them? The same riches, pleasures, and glory that he has chosen for himself. His glory is, to be the Son of God: he desires that his Father should cherish them as his brethren. He is the Holy of Holies: he would have them to be holy as he is holy. He is from eternity in the bosom of God: he will have them to dwell there, tasting with him the delights of beatitude for eternity. He is one with the Father in essence and in love: he

desires that they be one with him, and one among themselves. What a happiness for the faithful servants of Jesus Christ to have such an advocate! Religious soul, you then occupied a place in the heart of Jesus; you were included in his prayer, among the glorious society of the children of God. Ah! cast yourself at his feet, to thank him for so great a benefit. Beware of degenerating from your dignity, or forgetting him who thought of you in that important moment.

Most adorable Saviour, my life would not be sufficient to praise thy goodness: grant that I may continue in eternity what I commence in time; and that, immutably contemplating thee, I may unceasingly love and bless thee during endless ages.

3rd Point. Consider—"Just Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee: and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have made known thy name to them, and will make it known: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in thee." (*John*, xvii. 25, 26.) Jesus prays not for the world, because it knows him not; and it knows him not because it does not love him. Let no one deceive himself, says St. Bernard, he who loves the world loves not God. The love of God and of the world cannot dwell in the same heart. The love of God withdraws us from the world; the love of the world attracts us from God. And if we quit God, how shall we see him? He that loves not God is blind. No one can see God whose heart is not pure, and replenished with charity and meekness. And if he shall never behold him, must he not be eternally miserable? Wo! wo!—we cannot too often repeat it—wo to him who loves the world, because he shall never see Jesus Christ.

Preserve me, O Lord, from this wo! And if, in order to love thee, it is necessary to bid an eternal adieu to the world, let it be for ever banished from my heart,

that thy love alone may reign therein. I desire to be all thine; and since true happiness consists in seeing and loving thee, I desire to love thee here, that I may see and love thee for eternity.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus goes forth from the Supper-room with his Disciples to the Mount of Olives.

1st Point. Consider—"After having said these things Jesus went forth with his disciples." (*John*, xviii. 1.) Jesus goes forth from the supper-room, lest the house of his host should be disturbed. Fear not to lodge him in your heart, his presence always brings peace. He is considerate for all; endeavour, as far as you can, to be so towards your brethren. He goes forth as David persecuted by his son. It is with sorrow he quits his dear Jerusalem, but he is constrained to abandon her to her enemies. O unhappy soul, which by thy malice obligest Jesus Christ to forsake thee! Ah! offer him not this outrage. Rather quit thyself, renounce thy gratifications, to share in his sorrows. He goes forth, having sung a hymn. This hymn is a mark of his courage, and of the love he bears you. He counts his sufferings as nothing, in comparison to your salvation. Are you so devoted to his service? You should not be cowardly under so magnanimous a leader. In imitation of Him let yours also be the canticle of praise in the hour of affliction. In all your privations say, the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. When danger threatens, say: Whether I live or die, I am in the hands of the Lord, may I never depart from them! In the depth of humiliations and disgrace exclaim: I will bless the Lord at all times; no obstacle shall prevent me. Above all, live in such a manner,

that, like the saints, you may rejoice at the moment of death, and may render your soul into the hands of your Saviour, with a joy which shall demonstrate that the day of your death is for you a day of triumph.

2nd Point. Consider—"He went forth with his disciples beyond the torrent Cedron." (*John*, xviii. 1.) "Being come to the place called Gethsemani, he said to them: Sit you here whilst I pray." (*Matt.* xxvi. 36.) Admire the sweetness of Jesus! whilst his heart is overwhelmed with sadness, he provides for the repose of his disciples; he commands them to sit, whilst he goes forth to the death struggle. O what a good master do we serve; he is careful of us even in such little things as would seem unworthy of him, were not his mercy equal to his greatness! Courage, my soul, this good God loves us, guilty as we are. O how happy is he that confides in him, and reposes on his providence! Quit not this place. Make the loving heart of Jesus your dwelling. It was there the saints found their repose. Learn to obey your director, not only in the penances that subdue the body, but also in the counsels which tend to preserve your health. Obedience is better than sacrifice, and although there may be little merit in doing what is commanded, there would be much evil in disobeying.

O most sweet Jesus! how greatly deceived are they who think you a severe master You only require our reasonable service. My soul, let us seek the kingdom of God, and leave to him the care of ourselves: he will bless all our designs; and add to spiritual graces the temporal blessings conducive to our salvation.

3rd Point. Consider—"Jesus says to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death: remain here and watch." (*Mark*, xiv. 34.) It was necessary that he should discover the sorrow of his heart, otherwise never could they have conceived to what an excess it arrived. Ah! Lord, when did heaven consult the earth, when

had the Creator need of his creature? What consolation can thy disciples give thee? They are heart-stricken with grief; astonishment has closed their lips, and they can only reply by their tears. How can I console thee, wretch that I am? My child, wouldst thou soothe my grief? Remain here and watch with me. Art thou oppressed with sorrow?—Suffer with patience. Support this dereliction with meekness; learn of me to humble yourself, and submit yourself to a creature in your spiritual desolations, although his words seem only to augment your suffering. Watch over the movements of your heart. Take care that the spirit of darkness prevail not in the trouble of your mind. Watch and contemplate the wounds of my soul, in order that you may sympathize with me. Watch, that you may learn to console the afflicted, and mutually relieve each other in your sufferings. My most amiable Saviour, thou alone art a true friend in affliction; if then thou wouldst have men to console me, speak thou to me by their lips; and if thou wouldst have me console others, speak to them by my lips, for thou art the only consoler of the afflicted.

THURSDAY.

Jesus is overwhelmed by a profound sadness at the sight of our miseries.

1st Point. Consider—"He began to grow sorrowful." (*Matt.* xxvi. 37.) All the miseries of the world press upon the heart of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemani, and all the mercies of that heart are poured out upon the world! He first represents to himself all the temporal evils sin has introduced into the world. Sin alone is the cause of all our evils. He considers all men as his members, the children of his bowels, a part

of himself; and knowing all the calamities with which they are overwhelmed, he feels them more deeply than his own, and by compassion attracts them all into his heart, in order to sweeten their bitterness. This heart, so expanded, becomes a sea of sorrows, wherein are discharged all our evils, so that we may say there is not a drop in this ocean that is not embittered. O merciful Saviour! thou seemest to forget thy own beatitude, that thou mayest partake in my miseries. Truly thy charity is inconceivable, but the obduracy of my heart is not less so: my pains pierce thy heart, whilst thine touch me not. Thou languishest in hospitals, and I recognize thee not in thy suffering members. Thou lingerest in prisons, and I see thee not. Thou weepest with the afflicted, Thou sufferest with the sick, Thou expirest with the agonizing, and I have neither tears nor heart to alleviate thy sufferings. Lord, were thy mercy less than infinite, I would not dare to hope the pardon of my insensibility.

2nd Point. Consider—"He began to grow sorrowful." The original cause of all the sorrows of Jesus Christ was our spiritual miseries. From the first moment of his life, he beheld the pitiable condition of souls; their blindness, ignorance, and malice; finally, their eternal reprobation.

He had a distinct view of all our evils, and offered himself to death for our ransom; but his body being yet too weak to bear the cross, he attaches his heart thereto, never to be separated from it. Now he makes a new effort, and so oppressed is he with sorrow, that a miracle alone sustains his life under this excessive dolour. How sensible to Jesus the loss of so many reprobate souls! How deeply is he touched by the weaknesses and imperfections of his elect! O my sweet Saviour! afflicted innocence excites our compassion, but we are little affected with the misfortunes of the wicked. They merit the pains they endure, their

malice cries for vengeance, and provokes us to desire it. It is thou alone, O Lord, compassionatest even the most abandoned sinners; and these ungrateful beings have no pity on thee who art innocence itself. How long, O Lord, shall I sadden thy spirit by my disorders, adding evil to evil, and piercing thy heart with as many wounds as I commit sins?

3rd Point. Consider—"He began to grow sorrowful" There is no object more pitiable than a sinner who is insensible to his own misery, or who feels it not as he should. We commit in this respect two considerable faults; we are extremely sensitive in our temporal sufferings, and we are not sufficiently touched by our spiritual evils One and the other wound the heart of Jesus He grieves that our impatience under transitory afflictions causes spiritual evils much more deplorable; and he grieves still more that our insensibility to those evils prevents our seeking a remedy.

O my Saviour! how much am I indebted to thy mercy, which has redeemed me by so many pains and sorrows; from which I also expect eternal life, and the enjoyment of every good. Sweet Jesus, never withdraw this mercy from me, or let me be confounded in my expectation. "My child, have pity on thy own soul, if thou desirest that I should have pity on it; do not remove thyself from my mercy, and it shall not be taken from thee. If thou desirest to sympathize in my sufferings, begin with compassionating thy own miseries."

FRIDAY.

Jesus conceives a profound sorrow for our offences against his Father.

1st Point. Consider—"He began to grow sorrowful." Ask the Son of God why he is sorrowful, why

he weeps, why he sheds tears of blood? He will tell you it is your sins that overwhelm him with sorrow. He receives all things from the hand of God, and he is content with whatever Providence ordains. Jesus is the Holy of Holies, his soul, therefore, would be inaccessible to sorrow, but that he has charged himself with our crimes. He is now in the state of a penitent, because we are sinners. The offences by which we outrage the majesty of his Father, cast him into a sadness so profound that no creature can conceive it. All that we can say is, that his sorrow is commensurate with his knowledge. The beatific vision which unfolds the infinite grandeur and goodness of God, at the same time reveals to him the enormity of sin; and instead of that joy with which it replenishes the souls of the blessed, every ray of light it produces in his heart is a piercing sword of sorrow.

O my God, did sinners know thee as thou art, and as thou wilt be in eternity! But they think not, nor do they desire to think on it. Thou sendest them thy Son, who is the light of the world; and they prefer darkness to light.

2nd Point. Consider—would you understand yet more clearly the depth of that sorrow which overwhelms the heart of Jesus? It is equal to his love, and as his love is unbounded, so his sorrow is without measure. There have been saints whose sorrow for even a venial offence has caused their death. Ah! did you love more, your contrition would be more intense! Is your heart not touched when you consider that your sins have outraged the goodness of God, so deserving of your love? Have you no regret for afflicting so sensibly the heart of Jesus? A father says to his son who has disobeyed him: wicked child, thou wilt cause my death. If he is generous, this suffices to pierce his heart, and draw forth bitter tears. And thou, ungrateful child, art insensible to the voice of thy Redeemer, who complains that thou makest him sorrowful even unto death.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ suffers in proportion to all the crimes that have been, or ever will be committed, even to the end of ages. As he would satisfy in rigour, so would he suffer for all, and each like a viper stings his heart, and infuses therein the bitterness of its venom. How insupportable is this bitterness? The heart of Jesus overflows with sweetness, whose slightest drop would alleviate all the pains of hell; and nevertheless one sin is capable of changing all the sweetness of that heart into gall and bitterness. O malignity of sin! O patience of Jesus! Consider the number of his wounds; above all, those which you have inflicted. What share had you in that prodigious mass of crime? What have you done to expiate it? Where are your tears? Where is your penitence? What use do you make of that of Jesus Christ? O obduracy of the human heart! Shall I be wicked, because God is good? Shall I offend him, because he atones for my offences? Shall I multiply my disorders, because he endures the penalty? O Charitable Victim! wilt thou not have pity on me? Wilt thou not arrest the course of my iniquities? But thou, ungrateful sinner, wilt thou not have pity on thyself?—wilt thou not assuage the bitterness of his sorrow?

SATURDAY.

Jesus suffers excessive Confusion at being charged with the sins of the world.

1st Point. Consider—be not surprised that the Son of God is prostrate on the earth; he is confounded within himself at the imputation of our guilt; the leprosy of our sins, with which he is covered, fills him with horror. The deformity of sin produces shame, and its malice remorse. These are the two punishments that

follow, and which the justice of God has attached to it. Jesus takes upon himself both the one and the other He bears the regret and the confusion due to all the abominations of mankind. He is humbled and afflicted as if he were the guilty person. He is confounded to see himself allied with sinners. He who is the Holy of Holies, to be the chief of infamous malefactors! He, who by the glory of his birth is the true Son of God, to be the surety of those on whom he should take vengeance! to be the associate and brother of those of whom he should be the judge! He is confounded to see himself so little followed, so little loved, so little esteemed and acknowledged, whilst the prince of darkness is adored by all He is confounded to see himself subject to their weakness, and responsible for their disorders. He trembles, he is sad, he fears like unto them; and although he cannot sin, nevertheless, he must bear the chastisement, and be overwhelmed with confusion, to save them.

O King of Glory! to *thee* appertaineth honour, and confusion is *my due.* I am the sinner, thou art sanctity itself. Take from me, in thy mercy, that false shame which causes me to sin; and extend to me that holy confusion that makes thee blush for my offences.

2nd Point. Consider—If Jesus is confounded within himself for our sins, he is not less so before his Father. He prays to him, and he is rejected. He employs the endearing name of Father, and he is treated as a stranger and an alien. He stretches forth his hands to the divine mercy, and he is repulsed by justice. He implores that succour which is not refused to the most miserable, and he is abandoned to the fury of his enemies, as the vilest of men. In fine, he expects some consolation in the extreme anguish that oppresses him, and he receives but the gloomy sentence of death. How severe, how humiliating is this treatment! What abjection, what confusion is he plunged in!

O my Saviour! why should I complain, when thy Father rejects or seems deaf to my prayer? Have I not deserved it? But thou innocent Lamb, how hast thou merited this confusion, if not by having loved me too well?

3rd Point. Consider—shame causes us to conceal ourselves, lest men should behold our abjection. But Jesus would have men and angels witness his confusion. He in whom fear or sadness had never appeared, is suddenly so overwhelmed, that he is constrained to seek consolation amongst his disciples, and to receive it from the angel who is sent to comfort him. O profound humiliation! The Creator is reduced to the extremity of begging strength from his creature. He is treated with the utmost contempt by his eternal Father, who condemns him to an ignominious death, and heaven and earth must witness this decree, and the weakness to which his sacred humanity is reduced.

O how great is my pride and ingratitude, if after this I will not suffer a little confusion in his service and for his love! Alas! I am ashamed to confess my sins in private to a creature, and I am not ashamed to commit them in thy presence. Change, O Lord, my false shame into a holy humility, and my audacity into a salutary confusion for my sins.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Jesus is seized with fear at the sight of his torments.

1st Point. Consider—"He begins to be seized with fear." (*Mark*, xiv.) O astonishing prodigy! The Omnipotent, whom no evil can approach but by his own permission, is seized with a mortal fear. O King of glory! what fearest thou? Fear proceeds from evil hard to be overcome. What fearest thou, then, since

nothing can oppose thy omnipotence? He fears because he will not exert his power. His fear is not a mark of weakness, but an effect of his courage and love. He fears because he has become the substitute for sinners. He fears, in order to console us in our fear, and to alleviate the pain and disquietude that it produces in us. You desire to be exempt from those terrors and apprehensions that harass you. Be consoled: Jesus trembles at the sight of the cross and the approach of death. His countenance grows pale, his strength forsakes him; his heart, attacked by so many gloomy objects, would repel the terror that seizes it, and it shudders with horror.

Ah! why should I be troubled at my weakness, or surprised at my fears? My Saviour has feared confusion and contempt; he has dreaded pain, persecutions, calumnies, and the violence of his enemies. What wonder that the leaf trembles since the tree is shaken to its root.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus is seized with fear, because he would rectify our fears, and even sanctify them by his own. Your nature is timid and fearful: unite yourself to Jesus, and make his weakness your remedy. Suffer meekly the assaults of that passion, without being troubled. Let us not excite you to do anything unworthy the generosity of a Christian. Leave nothing undone that you ought to accomplish; and though you should meet death in the midst of the way, recoil not a single step.

O Jesus! thou hast mercifully assumed my infirmity; permit me to clothe myself with thy strength; if I cannot banish fear, I can sanctify it by thy grace. This is the advantage that I should draw from it, in order to profit by thy example. I shall thus convert a natural defect into a virtue; and though with less ardour, I shall not have less merit.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus suffers fear, he trem-

bles, to render his disciples intrepid. Ah! Lord, the martyrs go to death in triumph; and thou, the King of martyrs, goest trembling. The lamb has the courage of the lion, and the lion of Juda is weak as the lamb. What means this? His fear is our strength, and should awaken our confidence. Before Jesus feared death, it was an object of terror to all, because it was armed with its sting. But now that he has conquered, it would be cowardice to fear it. It is the object of the desires of the children of God. Arm yourself then against the terrors of death. It has the eyes of the basilisk, it only kills those who do not dare to prevent its gaze. Look upon it with a firm eye; you know not the place where it awaits you: expect it in all places. You know not the moment; be then always ready.

O my Saviour! it were no marvel that thou shouldst be intrepid in the presence of death; thou who hast the power to lay down thy life and to take it up again. It is more honourable for thee to impart courage to us by thy fear, and peace by the trouble of thy soul. O charitable Physician! how great is thy love, how admirable thy condescension; may thy mercy be ever blessed!

MONDAY.

Jesus feels an extreme repugnance for his Passion and Death.

1st Point. Consider—"And he began to fear and to be heavy." (*Mark*, xiv.) Jesus feels an extreme repugnance to suffer and die. This is not an imperfection or defect, but a natural feeling, of which he voluntarily receives the impression, in order to console us in our weakness. The faculties of the inferior parts of the soul are alarmed at the prospect of a death equally

ignominious and violent. Having assumed human nature, says St. Cyrill, he allows the sensitive appetite to form such aversions as are natural to it. But that which is admirable, he only permits these movements, that he may suffer more by the very repugnance he feels for suffering, which is a new pain that aggravates his torments. How ingenuous is thy love, O my Saviour, in causing thee to suffer for my salvation. Thou art pleased to undergo this aversion to animate me in the combat, and give me strength to overcome. Thou fearest death, to teach me it is not thy work, but the penalty of my malice; and nevertheless thou wouldst die, notwithstanding this repugnance, that I may learn, that although the faithful Christian flies suffering and death, because he is man, yet he is ready to accept them contrary to his inclination, if God so wills, because he is faithful, and has not less confidence in thee than distrust in himself. Thou wouldst not have him without fear, lest he should glory in his own strength; but thou also wouldst not have him too pusillanimous, as if God, who is his protector, were not powerful to defend him.

2nd Point. Consider—"And he began to fear and to be heavy." Jesus foresees that the greater portion of mankind, unmindful of, and ungrateful for, the benefit of his bitter passion, will render it unavailable to their salvation. This redoubles his repugnance to suffer, and causes him to feel an inconceivable sorrow that so few will be saved by such excessive torments. Alas! he says, why shed so much blood unprofitably? Who will avail themselves of it? Who will be grateful for the benefit? Who will value the stripes, the thorns, and the cross my enemies are preparing for me?

Grant, O my Saviour, that I may be of the happy few who profit of the grace so dearly purchased. Thy example consoles and instructs me at the same time. Henceforth I will not listen to the repugnances of nature. I will not complain that my labours are use-

less. I will accept the employment thou appointest me, without inquiring what fruit it will produce. I will accept my cross with simplicity from thy hand; I will undergo all the cares or difficulties incident to my occupation, without sparing myself, and leave to thee the success, without disquietude.

3rd POINT. Consider—"And he began to fear and to be heavy." It is afflicting to labour much, without deriving any profit therefrom; but it is much more grievous to perceive that the pain we undergo for another, turns to his prejudice instead of profit. This wounds the heart of Jesus, and fills it with bitterness. He sees, with an extreme sorrow, that his death will be the total ruin of the Jews, and the cause of their reprobation, as it will also be that of Christians, whose damnation will be the cause of its abuse. What an honour for the Jews to have the Saviour of the world amongst them, to see, to hear, to possess him! Nevertheless, instead of availing themselves of so signal a grace, they change it by their malice, into an occasion of eternal misery. Oh! with what anguish does their malice pierce the tender heart of their Saviour! Ah! he exclaims, must I be a rock of scandal to my own children? Must they be damned because I have come to save them? How true that the greatest benefits of God are often the greatest torments! O Christian, who hast received so many favours from Jesus Christ, dost thou not tremble for thy abuse of them.

TUESDAY.

Jesus has recourse to Prayer in his sadness.

1st POINT Consider—"And he was withdrawn away from them, a stone's cast: and kneeling down he prayed." (*Luke*, xxii) Jesus being penetrated with

sorrow has recourse to prayer. It is the magnet of the saints; their hearts are drawn thereto as to their centre; and if they do not always find repose, at least they derive from it strength and vigour. He chooses the time of night, because it is in the silence of creatures that the soul can better listen to the voice of God. He separates himself, though not without pain, from his beloved disciples, because prayer is a secret conversation between God and the soul, without witness, without noise, in the profound solitude of the heart. In fine, he knows that his sadness will but augment in this holy exercise, and that he is therein to receive his sentence: nevertheless he approaches it; because he goes not to seek consolation, but to render honour to his Father, and submit himself to his will. Is it thus you go to prayer? Do you go alone? Do you bring with you no idle thought? Do you go to learn the will of God, and annihilate your own? Do you seek the glory of God, and the death of self-love?

O my Saviour, how opposed is thy recollection to my dissipation, thy vigilance to my sloth, thy zeal to my self-love, that everywhere sullies the purity of my intentions. O my Saviour! if I possess not the qualities necessary for prayer, inspire me with the prayer that is necessary to obtain them.

2nd Point. Consider—"He fell upon his face, praying, and saying: O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." *(Matt.* xxvi. 39.*)* Behold in a suppliant and adoring God, your model in prayer. He is in the presence of his Father with a profound respect; his arms extended, his body prostrate on the earth, loaded with all the crimes of man, and bearing the confusion and humiliation on his countenance. His confidence, equal to his humility, makes him pronounce the endearing name of Father with as much tenderness as sorrow My Father, he says, I am sorrowful unto death; have

pity on thy Son. He implores that the chalice may pass, but he declares at the same time, that he is equally ready to receive the denial as the grant of his request. Finally, the more he is repulsed, the more he prolongs his prayer; and if he thrice interrupts it, it is from a movement of charity, that, forgetful of himself, makes him think on the safety of his disciples.

O sweet Jesus, whose every action is my instruction, what a reproach that I should be so distracted in prayer, where thou art so attentive; cold, where thou art so fervent; without respect, where thou art prostrate on the earth! O beautiful countenance, that art imprinted on the dust, mayest thou be engraven on my heart, sordid and earthly though it be. Sacred lips, that give to the earth the kiss of peace, to re-establish thereon its empire, breathe your love and serenity into my soul, that my prayers, animated by the spirit of the Son, may be agreeable to the Father.

3rd Point. Consider—"If this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done." (*Matt.* xxvi. 42.) Jesus prays, and is not heard; his Father rejects his prayer, and he complains not of a refusal seemingly so severe; and I, a worm of the earth, murmur when I am disregarded. O incomprehensible charity of the Son of God towards us! He demands two things in his prayer, one for himself, the other for us; and not being able to obtain both, he prefers our interest to his own. Learn thence, the true ecstacy of the most sublime prayer is to lose yourself in the will of God. Again learn, God willingly listens to the prayer that is conformable to his eternal law; but that which has its source in the inclinations of nature, or the inordinate desires of the heart, he rejects, however seemingly good; and this refusal is not so much a chastisement as a benefit. It seems sometimes that you pray, and he listens not; you desire to approach, and

he repels you; you form good purposes, and you fall the next moment.

O holy dissimulation of thy beneficence, thou affectest an apparent severity, whilst thou graciously combatest for those whom thou seemest to combat against! O my Saviour, destroy in me every desire but that of doing thy will, and never departing from it.

ASH-WEDNESDAY.

Jesus is strengthened by an Angel from heaven.

1st Point. Consider—"An angel from heaven appeared to him." (*Luke*, xxii. 43.) Whilst Jesus prays, all heaven is silent. An angel bears his prayer to the throne of God. All the blessed spirits unite in his supplications, not that he needs their assistance, but they owe their divine Lord this homage. Learn the esteem which you should have for prayer, by that of the angels, and by the power which it possesses over the heart of God. It was the angel Raphael who presented to God the prayers of Tobias. It was the angels who ascended by the ladder of Jacob, that bore his prayers to heaven, and who, descending, brought to him the favours of God. It is the angels who present our prayers, as incense at the throne of the Most High.

O my good angel, my faithful guardian, offer to God the sacrifice of my prayer, and render it pleasing in his sight; recommend my poor soul to his mercy, and implore the graces necessary for my salvation.

2nd Point. Consider—the angel who presented the prayer of Jesus descends from heaven, and appears to him in the excess of his sorrow. What does he bear in the chalice he presents on the part of the Eternal Father? The bitterness of the cross and death. Be-

hold the portion of the Son of God; behold your own. Oh, how bitter is this chalice! It is bitter, but it comes from heaven, it comes from the hand of God, and is carried by an angel. It is he who conducts you through the desert of this life, and who is to assist you at the hour of death. O how careful should you be to gain his friendship, that he may conduct you into the eternal tabernacles.

3rd Point. Consider — what is this marvellous operation of the angel who fortifies the Son of God in this prostration of all his powers? What can he say? What can he do to impart strength? Can he enlighten his mind?—It is united to the source of light. Can he fortify his will?—It is united to the principle of grace. What does he then? He represents the sensible motives capable of sustaining the inferior part of the soul, which is abyssed in sorrow. He represents the necessity of his passion, and the glory that will redound from it; the good pleasure of his Father, and the fruit it will produce in his elect. The angel pronounces these words with respectful awe, and Jesus listens with profound humility. O my Lord, does strength itself require to be fortified, and the power of the Creator to be sustained by his creature? Learn, my child, to support yourself in your weakness and discouragements, and to receive advice even from an inferior. For if human aids are wanting to you, I will sooner send an angel from heaven, or come myself to render you this good office. Have recourse then to me in your sorrows. Address yourself to the angel whom I have given you. One single inspiration that through him I shall breathe into the depths of your heart, will restore your interior peace.

THURSDAY.

Jesus falls into an Agony.

1st Point. Consider—"Being in an agony he prayed the longer." (*Luke*, xxii. 43.) Jesus is strengthened by the words of the angel, but he receives no sensible consolation in his pains. His humility accepts the one, to teach us to fear our weakness; but his charity refuses the other, to prove that we can remain firm in the service of God without sensible devotion. Thus Jesus instructs the strong and the weak; the latter, by receiving strength from on high; the former, by depriving himself of all sensible comfort. His distress, far from being alleviated, becomes extreme; his heart oppressed still more with fear, sadness, and confusion, he seeks relief, but to whatever side he turns he meets only objects of sorrow. If he looks to his Eternal Father, his anger overwhelms him; if to his blessed mother, he is pierced by her sorrow; if he considers the cross, he is seized with horror; in a word, nothing consoles, all augments his pain.

O Jesus, example of the strong, teach me to serve you without sensible consolation. O strength of the weak, teach me to make a good use of the consolation you have gained for me by your sorrows.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus in his extreme distress, like a poor criminal who awaits the sentence of death, imploring a mitigation of its rigour. Seeing the justice of his Father inexorable, knowing that he must die, his heart appalled at the frightful multitude of evils represented to it, is riven as it were into two parts, of which one recoils with horror from death, and the other receives it with invincible resolution. The one trembles under the scourge of God's wrath, the other accepts it with respect. The one fears torments, the other desires them. He is drawn by each with such violence,

that he suffers a mortal agony. All things, even himself, become to him a cruel martyrdom; for the effort he makes to overcome himself, makes nature tremble to its centre, and would have caused a hundred deaths, were he not sustained by his infinite power.

O my Saviour, whatever effort I make to resist my passions and surmount my repugnances, can never equal your agony. Grant, I beseech you, by your grace, that my life may be a perpetual combat against nature, and my death a victory, followed by a glorious triumph in eternity.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus quits not prayer under this extreme desolation; on the contrary, he prolongs it with greater application and fervour. He teaches us here by an admirable secret, that to overcome our dejection we must pray, and in order to pray, we must vanquish the repugnance we feel in prayer. He is agonized, to teach us, says St. Chrysostom, that we must follow God notwithstanding all the repugnances of our own will.

O my Saviour, teach me ever to prefer thy will to mine, and to persevere in prayer until I feel my interior calm, the resistance of corrupt nature destroyed, and my will submissive to that of thy Eternal Father, ready to suffer whatever he shall please, giving him sovereign dominion over my soul and body, and all that belongs to me, for time and eternity.

FRIDAY.

Jesus, in his agony, sweats blood.

1st Point. Consider—"His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling to the earth." (*Luke*, xxii. 44.) The voice of our sins cried for vengeance over the whole earth, and Jesus opens all the pores of his body, as so

many mouths to demand mercy. Our *malice* being excessive, the satisfaction is superabundant. To what, O Lord, do we owe this so prodigal a liberality? We owe it, in the first place, to the weakness to which his love has reduced his body, exhausted by his intense sufferings; for in this utter prostration, instead of water he sweats pure blood. O strength of the weak! where is thy virtue? O arm of the Omnipotent! who but thyself has thus disarmed thee? Secondly, we owe it to the ardour of his love to the magnanimity of his courage, and to the violence with which he combats his repugnances, and the sadness which our infidelities and ingratitude have caused him. Finally, we owe it to his mercy, that would bear the weight of the anger of God enkindled against us. O how venomous the wound of sin that so copiously draws his blood, that the earth around is saturated therewith! O how true it is, my Saviour, that thy mercies are above all thy works, and that our ingratitude alone seems to bear a proportion to them in extent!

2nd Point. Consider—"Whence is thy garment red, and thy habiliments like theirs that thread the vine-press?" (*Isaias*, lxiii. 2.) This miraculous shower of blood is a prodigy surpassing even angelic intelligence, but it is a mystery which instructs us in great truths. It is a sign of a great combat, and glorious victory of the excess of his love, his zeal, and his sorrow. O what an effort over nature which draws that stream of blood! What thirst for the salvation of man and the glory of his Father, that, anticipating the cruelty of the executioner, offers a voluntary sacrifice of his life. How great was the tempest in the heart of Jesus to cause that rush of blood! O how will this sweat one day accuse our sloth, that will not endure the least inconvenience, while he suffers for us the extremity of evil!

3rd Point. Consider—"Who is he that comes from

Edom and Bosra, in garments stained with blood? This beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength." (*Isaias*, lxiii. 1.) Come to the fountain of life, all you who thirst after the sovereign good. Lose not this precious blood which is shed for you. Jesus sheds it, first, to merit for you abundant graces in your last agony; often, then, recall the remembrance of his, and beseech him to assist you in that awful combat. Secondly, he sheds it to merit for you contrition and a spirit of penance In fine, he sheds it to animate you in the combat against nature. Why are you so tepid and pusillanimous in the service of God? It proceeds from your not seriously reflecting on the agony of Jesus.

O my Saviour, thou signest thy death with thy blood, to restore me to life. Suffer not this precious balsam to flow inefficaciously on me; but let it purify my soul, change my will, regulate my passions, and heal my wounds.

SATURDAY.

Jesus thrice visits his Apostles, and finds them sleeping.

1st Point. Consider — "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour with me?" (*Mark*, xiv. 37.) Judas watches, the enemies of Jesus are active, and the apostles sleep. Thus we sleep in prayer, although in the presence of the heavenly court. We sleep in temptation, whilst the shafts of our enemies fly around, and threaten us with deadly wounds. We sleep in our evil habits, and in our most important duties, without considering the injury to ourselves, or the prejudice to our neighbours. Religious soul, thou who shouldst watch over thy passions, over thy thoughts, and thy whole deportment, "why sleepest thou?"

Why dost thou not consider the importance of thy salvation, to gain which I have descended from heaven prayed, fasted, watched, poured out my blood as water, and expired on the cross? Why remainest thou thus in tepidity, in negligence, in forgetfulness, or in contempt of the only important affair?

O my Lord, I know not how to reply to a reproach so just. Confusion is my only excuse, silence my defence. I cast myself on thy mercy.

2nd Point. Consider—"Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation; for the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (*Mark*, xiv. 38.) Admire the vigilance and presence of mind of this good pastor. His soul is like the heavens, which in their greatest agitation continue unchangeable. He prays, directs, visits his flock; he animates, exhorts, reproves, in the depth of his agony; in the gloom of desolation that surrounds him, when his heart is rent by contending emotions, he is still watchful and devoted in his charity for his disciples Pray, he says, and watch, for the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Behold three excellent maxims against temptations—pray, watch, and diffide in yourself. Vigilance is the eye that discovers temptation, diffidence fears and avoids it. Prayer is the vivifying principle that imparts strength and resolution to vanquish. Without vigilance we are blind; without prayer, tepid; without diffidence, rash and presumptuous. Alas! we form good purposes, because the spirit is willing; but we come not to the practice, because the flesh is weak; and if the grace of Jesus Christ sustains us not, we shall continually fall. He removed but a stone's cast, and the Apostles sleep. What may not the tepid soul fear, from whom he is so much farther removed? Ah! Lord, depart not thou from me; if thou leave me, I shall fall.

3rd Point. Consider—"He comes a third time, and says, sleep now, and take your rest." (*Mark*, xiv. 41.)

How ingenious is charity in covering the multitude of our defects! Never was a mother's love more indulgent to an only son than that of Jesus to his disciples. Thrice he visited, and thrice he found them sleeping. Yet how cutting this indifference to the heart of Jesus, which love has rendered so sensible, to see himself abandoned, in this extremity, by those for whom he suffered, and whom he had so fondly cherished! And, nevertheless, the more their weakness appears, the more tenderness he testifies. The first time he reproves them with love, tempering the reproach with sweetness: at the second he awakes them, but without reproach; at the third, he consoles and desires them to take their rest. Spirit of Jesus, how sweet thou art! If thou didst not support our defects, what should become of us? My child, learn of me these three degrees of meekness towards your neighbour:—First, to reprove them without sharpness; second, to support them in silence; third, to console and assist them in their weakness. If you use the rod, it should be like that of Aaron, covered with flowers and fruits; you will gain all by sweetness, whilst by rigour all will be lost.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

Jesus goes forth from Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus commands his disciples to take a little repose, but immediately he awakes them, saying—"It is enough." (*Mark*, xiv. 41.) How short the repose of this life! We must watch without ceasing, because our enemies sleep not. "It is enough," he says. Necessity alone should be the measure of your comforts. If nature and self-love desire to pass these limits, say to them on the part of Jesus Christ—"It is enough." You desire more time for prayer, and to feel

more sensibly how sweet God is; be satisfied with what is given you— "It is enough." The present life is not a time for enjoyment, but for action and suffering. You would have more repose, more relaxation; but do not exceed what the rule prescribes—"It is enough." Nature is never content; the more you give the more it requires. Hold it within mediocrity: it will become accustomed thereto, and cause you no more trouble.

O my Saviour, when wilt thou alone possess my heart? When shall I forego all natural gratifications in order to serve thee with greater purity? When shall I have courage to say to thee in my labours and sufferings—yet more if thou willest? When shall I retrench all superfluous conveniencies and useless conversations, saying seriously to myself—"It is enough?" Ah! it is too much, the hour of repose is not yet arrived.

2nd POINT. Consider—to confirm his apostles, and prepare them for the combat, Jesus adds, that—"the hour is come," (*Mark*, xiv. 41,) in which they should remember their promise to follow him unto death. O my soul! behold the hour in which you must execute the holy resolutions you have formed in the presence of God. It is in the occasion, in the time of temptation, in the midst of peril, you must prove your fidelity; then will appear whether your desires were sincere, your devotion solid. How great is my inconstancy, O Lord! I form good purposes in prayer, but when called on to practise, I no longer remember them; I despise danger when absent, and I lose courage as soon as it presents itself. What avail then the protestations so often reiterated in prayer? My child, if so many faults are committed, notwithstanding your good resolutions, what would be the consequence of neglecting to form them? Beware of omitting, but be more careful in accomplishing them. I will augment the fervour of your good desires, in proportion to your fidelity in

practising, during the day, that with which I have inspired you in prayer.

3rd POINT. Consider—"Rise up, let us go. Behold, he that will betray me is at hand." (*Mark.* xiv. 42.) It is no longer the voice of a man agonised with fear. Divine love has prevailed over the weakness of the inferior part of the soul by means of prayer. In this divine exercise we must seek vigour of mind. Prayer is the nerve of our strength Behold Jesus, pressed by love, advancing to meet his sufferings. He invites you to follow him, saying—rise. let us go to combat our enemies—let us go to visit the bashful poor—let us go to the prison and to the hospital, and learn to suffer the miseries of life—let us go to exercise meekness and charity towards all, notwithstanding the risings of nature. When will you embrace joyfully any considerable mortification in imitation of Jesus Christ? Such is the spirit of the Son of God—such is the spirit of the saints. They do not await labours, they seek them. St. Andrew embraced his cross in a transport of joy; St. Lawrence extended himself on the gridiron; St. Francis sought martyrdom among the Saracens; St. Dominick, among the Albigenses; St. Ignatius, among the Turks. Rise from all your evil habits, and have recourse to penance. Rise, faithful soul, and follow your spouse to Calvary. Rise, tepid and slothful, break your sleep to receive the first rays of the sun of justice, that you may be enlightened and warmed with his love.

MONDAY.

Jesus, by his word, casts his enemies on the ground.

1st POINT. Consider—"As soon as he said to them I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. (*John.* xviii. 6.) The Jews seek Jesus as a mortal

man, and he replies as God, making them feel the power hidden under the weakness of our nature. "I am He." (*John*, xviii. 5.) Behold how by a word, a look, he prostrates his enemies, who thought to vanquish him by the force of their arms. O impotence of man! O power of God! "I am He." Be comforted in thy affliction, faithful servant, thou hast a God for thy protector, who with a word, can overturn all thy enemies. "I am He." O holy remorse! O pointed arrow that penetrates the Christian heart! God beholds me, he knows all, he is near me, whispering secretly, "I am He." Fear the effect of his words, and the power they have over the impious. What will it be when he appears as judge, if it is terrible when he is to be judged by his enemies. How sweet is that voice to his elect! that voice which gave courage to his apostles amidst the tempest; which converted the Samaritan, and by her the city of Samaria; gained St. Paul, and of a persecutor made him an apostle!

O my Lord, say to my sinful soul, when she shall go forth from her prison, "I am He," thy Saviour, thy Redeemer, thy sovereign good, who pardons thy offences, and makes thee partaker of my mercies.

2nd Point. Consider—the Jews who had been prostrated by the power of Jesus, arise by his permission; but they are not converted. He could have left them extended on the earth; but love gains the victory over power, and he who by his word could have annihilated, is satisfied with prostrating his enemies, affording them by this light chastisement, an opportunity of entering into themselves. But instead of repenting of their malice, they persevere in their blindness, without being moved either by his power that had cast them down, or his goodness that had again raised them. O deplorable condition of the children of Adam, who are chastised without being corrected, who are punished without being purified!

O my sweet Jesus, I ask not to be exempt from the chastisement my offences have merited, lest I should be excluded from the number of thy children; but I beseech thee, that the pain I suffer may be a remedy for the evil I have committed, and may preserve me from falling into the eternal punishment of the reprobate.

3rd Point. Consider—"If you seek me, let those go away." (*John*, xviii. 8.) Admire the tenderness of this Father, who exposes himself to death for the preservation of his children. He feeds them with his own flesh, as if he would incorporate them with himself. In fine, he procures their liberty by relinquishing his own, and has more care of their safety than of his own life. How happy are those who live under so sweet and powerful a protection! How consoling to think Jesus interposes himself as a victim between the justice of God and sinners! "My Father," he says, "let thy anger fall upon me, but spare those whom thou hast given me; let not one be lost." Amiable Guardian of men, what shall I offer in gratitude for such a benefit? "My child, offer thyself with courage to labour in my service. Be ready to bear the heaviest burdens, rather than cast them upon others. Be vigilant, that the souls I have committed to thy care perish not. One day thou shalt have to render an account for them."

TUESDAY.

Jesus is bound by the Jews.

1st Point. Consider—"They took Jesus and bound him." (*John*, xviii. 12.) The liberty of the kings of the earth is inviolable. Whence comes it then that the Son of God is loaded with chains? Is he not the King of kings, and absolute master of the human will? Jesus

is bound as an innocent victim, devoted for the salvation of the world. The law ordained that the victim should be bound, lest pain should occasion any natural movement which might cause the sacrifice to appear involuntary; for God will not be served with an unwilling heart. A generous devotedness is alone worthy of him. Never was victim more willingly immolated than Jesus: he needed not bonds to prevent the movements of the body, of which he was absolute master; but he would be bound, to subject himself to the law, and die by obedience.

O my Saviour! grant that my obedience be always voluntary, and my will always submissive to obedience. It is too great an honour to be thy victim, too great a happiness to be consumed in thy service.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus is bound by the chains of love. "He loved me and delivered himself for me." For if love had not first bound his heart, never could his enemies have seized him. O charity! how powerful are thy chains, since they captivate a God! Ah! why dost thou not bind me so strictly as that I shall never be separated from him.

O my divine Jesus, when I behold thee thus bound in fetters, I am filled with horror; and astonishment would overwhelm me, did I not know that love had first enchained thy heart. Ah! it is mercy that has made thee a prisoner, to deliver me from slavery. I give thee thanks, who by thy fetters hast so powerfully broken mine; but if thou hast broken them, why am I still in bondage? Or if bondage is pleasing to me, why am I not the slave of thy love, rather than of my passions? Ah! my Master, who alone hast power to bind and unbind, make me a prisoner, in order that I may be free. Disengage me from myself, and unite me inseparably to the cross.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus would be bound, to console his afflicted servants. Remember my bonds,

says the Apostle, and St. Chrysostom after him. When you are in affliction, remember the chains of St. Paul. If the bonds of the apostles and martyrs are sacred, with what reverence and love should we remember those of Jesus Christ? Are you in desolation? Call to mind the last sorrowful night that our Lord spent in chains. Are you pressed by temptation? Bind your will with the chains of Jesus, that you may never be separated from the fidelity you owe him. Are you in humiliation and dependence? Remember that Jesus Christ, to console you, was pleased to bear a heavy yoke, and suffer vile creatures to deprive him of liberty, forcing him from tribunal to tribunal, manacled as a criminal. O Lord, who would not esteem himself too much honoured to be in bonds with thee? I shall prize them more, since thou hast borne them, than all the treasures of the earth; I shall esteem it a greater glory to bear them after thee, than to stop the course of the heavens, or command the infernal spirits.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus is led from the Garden of Olives.

1st Point. Consider—"And they led him away to Annas first." (*John*, xviii. 13.) Jesus is led forth as a criminal from the garden of Olives, as the first man was driven from the terrestrial Paradise. Adam committed the crime. Jesus undergoes the penalty; his confusion is inconceivable. Were God to trifle with the lives of men, it would not be strange, for he is master of them; and if he uses not his power, but treats them with respect, as the wise man says, this is an effect of his bounty, which derogates not from his sovereign dominion. But that a vile creature, a worm of the earth, should sport with the person and life of a God, is an unsupportable

outrage. O how often have you thus treated him? How many are there who make a jest of the goodness and mercy of God? And you, miserable sinner, who cannot support the least contempt, how do you treat the Lord of glory? Is it possible, my Saviour, that thou hast with so much patience suffered even to this hour the indignity with which I have treated thee? What irreverence in prayer! How little modesty and recollection in thy divine presence! What coldness and indifference in receiving thy sacred body, which thou givest with so much love to those who make thee so ungrateful a return!

2nd Point. Consider—"They led him away to Annas first." Who would not be sensibly touched by the meekness with which the Son of God suffers himself to be led to death? What he endures from the violence of his enemies, or the cords that bind him, is inconceivable. He is reduced to extreme weakness by the mortal agony and loss of blood he has sustained. Nevertheless, he is driven along at the will of a merciless rabble, who load him with blows and injuries. He bears all with incredible patience, without complaint, without resistance, in profound silence, submitting to all these barbarians require, in order to atone by this painful journey for so many idle and dangerous steps, so many superfluous visits, and above all, for the wanderings of your mind and heart. Follow him in spirit, accompany him in his thorny path, and when you perform any journey, when you pass through the streets, remember your Master, and say with tender compassion for his sufferings: My sweet Jesus, would I had the hearts of all men, that I might sympathize in thy sorrows. O precious blood, flowing from the feet of my Saviour, efface the stains of my sins.

Grant, O Lord, that I may never stray from thy footsteps. Regulate all the movements of my soul and body, and conduct my steps to a blessed eternity.

3rd Point. Consider—"And a certain young man followed him, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and they laid hold on him. But he casting off the linen cloth, fled from them naked." (*Mark*, xiv. 51.) This is a figure of the nakedness of evangelical poverty, says venerable Bede. To renounce the world in order to ensure salvation, is an act of great courage. To leave all things that we may preserve the grace of God, is an act of great wisdom. Of all worldly possessions, a winding-sheet alone will accompany us to the tomb; and even that must be abandoned to the moth and the worm. Let us forsake the world before it flees from us; let us relinquish all, rather than lose God. "My child," says the author of the Imitation, "renounce all, and you shall find all." (*Imit.* b. iii. c. 32.)

THURSDAY

Jesus enters Jerusalem.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem by the same gate as on the day of his triumph; but that was an entrance of glory, this of ignominy. That was in the light of noon, this is in the darkness of night. In the first he entered as King, when they cried, Hosanna to the Son of David; now he enters as a criminal, while they exclaim, Crucify him. Is it as king, or rather as captive, he enters your heart by the participation of his divine mysteries? Does he enter it amid the darkness of sin, or in the light of grace? Is it to live or die therein? Ah! I fear, most amiable Master, that my heart is to you a prison, and my communion a treason.

O Lord, permit it not! Enter as King, in the splendour of thy glory, to commence therein a new life, by triumphing over all my passions and vices.

2d Point. Consider—Jesus now entering the city, proves the inconstancy of the human mind; yet he is ever immutable. Whatever treatment he receives from mankind, he is still their Redeemer; he never abandons the design of saving them. Be careful to preserve equality of mind under all vicissitudes; be not elated by prosperity, nor dejected in adversity; bless God alike in desolation as in consolation; for God is always the same. Although you confer a favour on the ungrateful, fear not that it is lost, but zealously preserve the desire of doing good. Despise the honours, praise, and applause of the world. Nothing is more inconstant or of shorter duration.

O my God, how faithless are our protestations! To-day we are fervent in thy service, and to-morrow we again sadden thy holy spirit by our accustomed failings; yet thou, who art fidelity itself, sufferest patiently this ingratitude!

3rd Point. Consider—Whilst Jesus passes through the streets, the people, awaked by the noise, run to behold the spectacle. All are in astonishment; and whereas, they heretofore considered him as a prophet, they now declare him to be a criminal and impostor. Jesus suffers this confusion in silence. He conceals both his power and his innocence, and appears as a criminal and weak man. He may say with Job: "The multitude that gazed upon me did not trouble me; I suffered without impatience the contempt of my friends and my neighbours; I uttered no word of defence, but retired within myself, without showing forth a single ray of my divinity." When will you have courage to receive meekly an affront, although you have power to resent it? It argues great self-command, not to exhibit the authority invested in us. It is a glorious victory to yield in argument, and be willing to appear overcome. The honour is due, not to him who would triumph, but to him who can restrain and moderate himself

O most humble Redeemer! although omnipotent, thou wouldst seem as if weak and infirm; and I, who am impotence itself, desire to display a power that belongeth not to me. Teach me, Lord, that true humility of heart, which relishes self-annihilation, and despises the pride of men, who, being nothing, seek to appear great in the world.

FRIDAY

Jesus is presented to Annas, who sends him to Caiphas.

1st POINT. Consider—"They led him first to Annas." (*John*, xviii. 13.) Jesus is presented first to Annas. The divine Redeemer knocks at the door of his heart, secretly reproaching him with his malice and cruelty. Happy had he recognised his Saviour! The pitiable state to which the Man-God is reduced, would have touched a heart the most hardened, but he stifles all the sentiments of compassion, and after having satiated his eyes with a spectacle which he had impatiently awaited, he immediately sends his prisoner to Caiphas, who was the high priest of that year. Learn to correspond with fidelity to grace when it is offered; if you trifle with it, it will pass away, and may never return. When the Son of God visits you, offer him a holy violence; say with the spouse—"I found him whom my soul loveth; I will hold him and I will not let him go." (*Cant.* iii. 4.) Beware of slighting his presence, or the hour shall come when you will call and he will not hear.

Give me, O Son of the living God, a heart docile to thy grace; it imports little by what hand thou art pleased to conduct me, since I am assured that thy providence always governs it. I am indifferent to the medium through which I receive thy orders: it suffices

that I know they proceed from thee, who art my first principle, and that they lead me to thee who art my sovereign beatitude.

2nd Point. Consider—Caiphas interrogates Jesus concerning his doctrine and his disciples. "Jesus answers him: I have spoken openly to the world, and in secret I have spoken nothing." (*John*, xviii. 20.) Jesus replies regarding his doctrine, but he is silent with respect to his disciples, as he could not commend, neither would he dispraise them. Learn to be silent when you cannot speak to the advantage of your neighbour. Nothing is more contrary to a spirit of penitence, than a liberty in speaking of the defects of others. It is a sign you are blind to your own faults when you are so quick-sighted to those of your brethren. If you could once enter seriously into yourself, and be occupied in deploring your own disorders, you would have no time for censuring the conduct of others. Learn, secondly, that being a disciple of Jesus, your life should be formed on that sacred model. If your comportment contradicts his doctrine, what will he one day say to you—he who is the master of humility, patience, charity, and all virtues, seeing you so vain, so immortified, so little charitable, in fine, so irregular in your whole conduct? How justly, O my Saviour, mayest thou complain of so faithless a disciple! nevertheless, thou dissemblest my faults, thou awaitest my return, and pleadest for me before the Eternal Father.

Grant, Lord, that my life may be henceforth conformable to thy doctrine; that at the hour of my death thou mayest not be ashamed to acknowledge me for thine own.

3rd Point. Consider—"One of the officers standing by, gave Jesus a blow." (*John*, xviii. 22.) How astonishing the audacity of this menial! how cruel, how ignominious, and unjust, the outrage offered to Jesus! Innocence and truth speak by the mouth of a

God, whence issue only words of life, and there is found a hand so daring, so barbarous, so impious, as to strike him on the face. O spectacle of amazement to angels and men! O heavens! let darkness veil thy horror. O earth, tremble to thy centre! The countenance of a God (who can believe it?) is stricken by a servile and armed hand. Admire the patience and meekness with which Jesus suffers this atrocious insult. A man is known by his countenance, says the holy scripture, the expression whereof indicates the treasures hidden in the depth of his heart. Look upon this beautiful countenance, which the angels contemplate with rapture, and which the cruelty of man disfigures. There shall issue from it rays that will discover to you great treasures, and manifest the reason why he suffers this deadly insult, without taking vengeance. He suffers it to efface the shameful stain of original sin, and to atone for the confusion due to our crimes. He suffers it to emancipate the sinner from the thraldom of the devil. He suffers it to give a signal example of patience, and to teach us the forgiveness of injuries.

How far removed am I, O Lord, from thy divine example of patience and meekness. Take from my heart, I conjure thee, every feeling of resentment that pride and self-love excite therein; and grant that I may embrace for thy glory, the humiliations thou mayest ordain for my sanctification.

SATURDAY.

Jesus outraged in the house of Caiphas.

1st Point. Consider—"Then they spit in his face." (*Matt.* xxvi. 67.) Hitherto the enemies of Jesus had observed some apparent form of justice, in order to conceal their passions under the semblance of religious

zeal; but having now condemned him to death, their fury is no longer restrained. They load him with unheard of outrages, they cover his face with their vile spittle. Behold, Christian soul, this divine countenance which the Jews thus dishonour! It is the same the angels contemplate with delight; it is the countenance that imparts consolation to the afflicted, and which even the Gentiles ardently desired to see, saying to the apostles—we would see Jesus. O bright heaven! O glorious Sun of Justice! that sheddest on us thy benign influence, what storm has covered thee with these thick and foul clouds?—Criminal thoughts, vile exhalations of my grovelling heart, which thus sully thee, by tarnishing the divine image impressed on my soul. Uncharitable tongue that woundest thy brother, knowest thou not to whose resemblance he is made? O my Saviour, when I contemplate thee in this pitiable condition, thy face, as a bright mirror, clearly discovers to me the deformity of my sins! Ah! give me tears to efface these shameful stains; give me a heart of flame, to love him who has borne such indignities for love of me. When shall I behold thee face to face, to bless and thank thee eternally for thy excess of charity?

2nd Point. Consider—"And the men that held him, mocked him and struck him." (*Luke*, xxii. 63.) The soldiers and servants of Caiphas, after their master had retired, assembled round Jesus, to mock and insult their prisoner. Who can conceive the indignities, the outrages, the ignominious buffets which their cruelty, goaded on by the fury of the demons, inflict upon him. Now is fulfilled the prediction of the Prophet: "There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him; despised and most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infir-

mities and carried our sorrows, and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted." (*Isaiah*, liii.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And they blindfolded him, and smote his face. And they asked him, saying: Prophesy, who is it that struck thee? And blaspheming, many other things they said against him." (*Luke*, xxii. 64, 65.) The contempt which the Son of God endured all this night, was not the least sensible of his torments. But above all, the foul bandage they placed on his eyes, as if to mock with impunity the Eternal Wisdom, was an intolerable insult. Admire the blindness of these impious men, who perceive not that in veiling this divine face, they condemn themselves never to behold it—a sad presage of their eternal reprobation. Bewail also the folly of sinners, who think themselves secure in hiding their crimes under the veil of night, as if they could conceal them from the eyes of him who is the author of light. In fine, be astonished at the bounty of your Master, who bears this bandage in order to give you courage, and assure you he will forget all your past offences, provided that henceforth you abuse not his favours.

O most loving Jesus thy eyes are open on the actions of men: but only the just perceive thee. The wicked cannot endure thy presence, for thy judgments terrify them. Happy is he whose eyes are covered by the veil of divine charity, which conceals his offences from God, whilst it hides those of his neighbour.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Conversion of Saint Peter.

1st Point. Consider—"But Peter followed him afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the

midst of the hall, and were sitting about it, Peter was in the midst of them. Whom when a certain servant maid had seen sitting at the light, and had earnestly beheld him, she said: This man also was with him. But he denied him, saying: Woman, I know him not. And another certain man affirmed, saying: Of a truth, this man was also with him: for he is also a Galilean. And Peter said: Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately as he was yet speaking, the cock crew. And the Lord turning looked on Peter." (*Luke*, xxii.) Admire the happiness of Saint Peter, on whom rests that eye whose glance carries penitence to his soul. It is an eye of mercy, for it is turned on him without being sought for. It is most generous, for it seeks the disciple after he has offended and outraged his master. It is most charitable, for Jesus forgets his own sufferings, to cure the wound of his servant. It is most powerful, for it raises his courage, animates his hope, and melts his heart into tears of bitter sorrow. It is sweet and gracious, for it spares the confusion of his crime, and cures the ulcer without touching it. After such an example of mercy, who shall fear to expose his wounds to so charitable a physician?

O sweet Jesus, I offer thee my heart, and conjure thee to cast upon it a look of pity; if one look suffice not, pierce it with a thousand darts from those eyes, for they are darts of love, that give life to the sinner, while they destroy sin.

2nd Point. Consider—"And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as he had said: Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter, going out, wept bitterly." (*Luke*, xxii.) Let us contemplate this miracle of grace, and learn from the tears he sheds for his infidelity, how we should weep for our sins. His tears are the marks of profound emotion; they flow, not only from the eyes, but from a heart penetrated by sorrow. He defers not, for sin is so heinous, and the

moment of grace so precious, that he who knows the value of the one, and the deformity of the other, no sooner discovers his offence, than he renounces and deplores it. The just man rises promptly, being quickly alive to the reproaches of conscience. The tears of Peter flow not from fear, but from the love he bears his Master. He not only weeps, but he weeps bitterly. He needs not to declare his sin, for, as St. Ambrose says, his tears already confess it. They are mute prayers, that merit pardon without asking it—that defend his cause without pleading. Happy tears, says St. Leo, that have not less virtue to cleanse his sin than the sacred waters of baptism, and which possess this additional advantage—whereas the waters of baptism cannot be reiterated, the tears of this blessed Apostle flowed incessantly, to the last moment of his life.

3rd Point. Consider—in the spirit of adoration, the designs of Divine Wisdom in the fall and repentance of this great saint. His fall is permitted, to humble his secret pride. St. Augustin says, it is sometimes expedient, for those who are subject to hidden sin, to fall into a manifest crime, that this confusion may discover what before had lain concealed from them; and that they who nourish a secret complacency in their own virtue, may learn humility by their weakness, and their weakness by their fall. He is permitted to fall, that he may be more solidly established in fear and love: in fear, by the remembrance of his fault; in love, by the remembrance of the pardon that followed. In fine, his fall is permitted, that he may learn meekness and mercy towards sinners, and that he, who is to be the sovereign pastor of the church, should not refuse to others the pardon he needed himself. Who dare presume on his own strength, seeing that the head of the Apostles is fallen? Who dare not hope for pardon, seeing that a penitent sinner bears the keys of divine mercy?

O my Saviour, since I am the companion of Peter's sin, grant that I may imitate his repentance. Let my heart become a fountain of tears, that shall change into bitterness all that is pleasing to nature, and leave me nothing but sorrow for having offended thee.

MONDAY.

Jesus passes the night in prison.

1st Point. Consider—Why is the Son of God enclosed in this dungeon? He is become the prisoner of divine justice, because he has charged himself with our crimes; the violence of his enemies has prevailed against him, because he has assumed our weakness;—but love is the chief cause. This it was that imprisoned him during nine months in the Virgin's womb; afterwards in the crib of Bethlehem, and in the tabernacle on our altars. It was this which bound him in the Garden of Olives, will shortly enclose him in the sepulchre, and cause him to descend into hell, that he may deliver thence the captive souls. In fine, love now makes him prisoner in the house of the high-priest, to break the chains of sinners, whose place he takes, and to sanctify those of the martyrs and confessors, who are the members of his mystic body.

2nd Point. Consider—"Friend and neighbour thou hast put far from me; and my acquaintance, because of misery." Jesus is abandoned by his disciples; Peter has denied him with terms of execration; his enemies have confined him in a narrow prison; he is left to the mercy of slaves and servants; he is become as a mark for their cruelty and insolence. Go in spirit to console him in his captivity, in the horror of darkness, and under the weight of his fetters.

Divine love can force gates of iron, and nothing is impenetrable to him who seeks God in sincerity of heart. Behold, with the eyes of the soul, the heavenly countenance of your spouse darkened by the obscurity of this place which the sun never enlightens. St. Jerome remarks, that the day of judgment alone shall reveal the martyrdom our Saviour suffered during that night of unequalled sorrow.

O my Redeemer! thou hast hitherto divided thy nights between prayer and works of charity, leaving little time for repose; but thou passest this in continual sufferings, to confound the sloth and dissipation of worldlings, who consume so many nights in vain amusements. Vouchsafe so to regulate my vigils and my repose, that I may happily pass from the night of this miserable world to the day of a glorious eternity.

3rd Point. Consider—"I was in prison, and you visited me not." (*Matt.* xxv. 43.) Jesus is still a prisoner: if he suffers not the fetters in his own person, he bears them in his members. You have heard the reproach he will one day make to the rich worldling—"I was in prison," &c. Beware of appearing before this tribunal devoid of works of charity. Faith suffices not; if you have not charity you are nothing. Amongst the works of mercy, that of visiting the prisoner holds a prominent place. A prison is the tomb of the living man. If the victim of crime, does he not need the instructions and consolations of religion, that he may draw from present punishment a means of salvation? If incarcerated for debt, being at once poor and deprived of means of earning subsistence, is not his claim the stronger on that charity which soothes and sustains the afflicted? You say, he eats the public bread. O heart insensible to the sufferings of your fellow man! The bread he eats is the bread of sorrow. Only visit him in his lonely cell, that you may be taught commiseration for suffering members of Jesus Christ.

O Prisoner of love, restrain with thy bonds all my powers and senses. Ah! Lord, who givest bounds to the ocean, and enclosest its waves as in a prison, according to the language of Scripture, arrest the impetuosity of my passions, which rise as the waves of the abyss, and never permit my desires to transgress the bounds of that submission I owe to thy sacred will.

TUESDAY.

The Jews confirm their sentence against Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—"And as soon as it was day, the ancients of the people, and the chief priests and scribes, came together, and they brought him into their council, saying: If thou be the Christ, tell us.....Who said: You say that I am. And they said: What need we any farther testimony? For we ourselves have heard it from his own mouth. And the whole multitude of them rising up, led him to Pilate." (*Luke*, xxii. 66.) The Jews conspire the death of Jesus, but would have him perish by the hands of strangers. They wish to engage Pilate in their crime, that they may screen themselves under his authority, should the people rise up against them. Such are the councils of the impious. But admire the judgments of God, who draws from their crime our advantage and their own punishment. Jesus had been promised to the Jews, and appeared among them according to the predictions of the prophets. They received him not but closed their hearts against his graces, their eyes against his sanctity and miracles, their ears against his doctrine and counsels; thus incurring their reprobation in delivering Jesus to Pilate, and so transferring him to the gentiles. O blind and ungrateful of heart! have you so long expected

your Messiah, thus perfidiously to betray him? Have you so ardently desired he should be born of your nation, only to give him over to the infidel?

2nd Point. Consider—"And they brought him bound." (*Matt.* xxvii.) The only son of God comes forth from the house of Caiphas, and appears in the streets of Jerusalem, bound and manacled, surrounded by officers of justice, followed by the magistrates and a multitude of the people, who look upon him as a seducer, and change the honour which five days before they had rendered to him, into injuries and opprobrium. Admire the patience and bounty of Jesus, who, with a generous meekness, sustains all these insults for your salvation. You may also consider here what the piety of the saints suggests, how the Blessed Virgin having learned from the Apostles all that had passed regarding her divine Son, goes forth early in the morning from the supper-room, where she had spent this night of anguish, offering to God a sacrifice of resignation and sorrow, to meet the beloved of her soul, that she may participate in all his sufferings. Having sought in vain an entrance at the palace of the high priest, she now perceives by the shouts of the people, that her divine Son is condemned to death, and that they lead him to Pilate, that he may confirm and execute the sentence pronounced against him.

O God, what must be the agony of this mother! Who can express the sorrow that mutually pierced their hearts, when the eyes of Jesus and Mary met! O Jesus! O Mary! Admirable union of the Son and the Mother! Let us follow Jesus, with Mary, unto the cross; for death itself shall not break the bond that unites their hearts in sufferings and in love.

3rd Point. Consider—"Then they lead Jesus from Caiphas to the governor's hall." (*John*, xviii.) The Jews being arrived at the palace of Pilate, deliver unto him their prisoner; but they enter not the house of the

Pagan, that they may not contract a legal impurity that would prevent their eating the Paschal victims Thus treason and vengeance are masked under a pre text of religion. Their souls are charged with fury, their tongues with calumny ; and yet they scruple the violation of a legal ceremony ! O how many are there who thus scruple trifles, while they neglect without remorse the duties of their state ! They will not moisten their tongue in water on their fasts of devotion, yet they make it an instrument to break the law of charity, and wound the feelings and character of their neighbour. Deliver me, sweet Jesus, from so fatal an error, and teach me, by the light of thy grace, that sincerity is the foundation of true devotion, and that solid piety cannot dwell in a false conscience.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus interrogated by Pilate.

1st Point. Consider—" Pilate, therefore, went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said to him : Art thou the king of the Jews ?" (*John*, xviii.) The governor having heard the calumnious accusations of the Jews, re-enters the pretorium, and interrogates Jesus on the most important subject of their accusations. " Art thou," he says, " king of the Jews ?" Jesus displays an equal wisdom in his silence and in his replies. " Sayest thou this thing of thyself," he says, " or have others told it thee of me ?" Do my poverty and humility give any cause of umbrage to Cæsar ? Pilate, admiring the modesty and meekness of Jesus, replies : " Am I a Jew ? Thy own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee up to me : what hast thou done ?" (*John*, xviii.) O judge, didst thou know him to whom thou puttest this question, thou wouldst not interrogate

him on unjust allegations, but thou wouldst accuse thyself before him. *He* should not stand before thy tribunal; but prostrate at his feet, *thou* shouldst implore pardon of thy offences. Thou demandest what he has done. O Pilate! it is a secret above thy comprehension. He has created the heavens and the earth; thou thyself art the work of his hands. Wouldst thou know what he hath done? Interrogate the demoniacs whom he hath delivered, the sick whom he hath cured, the dead he hath resuscitated. Such are the actions that have attracted the envy of his enemies, whose malevolence proceeds from the benefits he hath conferred.

2nd Point. Consider—"Pilate saith to him: What is truth?" (*John*, xviii.) Though truth is nigh to us, yet, like Pilate, we see it not. It speaks to us interiorly, but we are deaf to its voice. Why do we not see it? Because we will not. Love is the eye of the heart; we are unwilling to see what we do not love. We see truth as we do lightning, closing our eyes and trembling with fear. Why do we not listen to it? Because it flatters us not. It does not conceal or dissemble our faults, but confounds and terrifies by its reproaches; and since Truth itself was nailed to the cross, all Christian truths are crucifying. Do you desire to know the value of truth? Purify your heart. Truth is, in the soul, as the sun, which can only be seen when the eye of the interior is purified. Mortify your passions. It is by the tears of penance you must return into the light of God, like the blind man who only was restored to sight after being washed in the pool of Siloe. Be humble and simple, that your interior may be enlightened. The vain man is a slave to the spirit of darkness, whom pride caused to fall from the truth. In fine, have recourse to prayer. We must often knock by prayer at the gate of truth, "before it manifests itself to us" Ask it, therefore, often of God; say to him, with the royal Prophet: Lord, send forth thy

light and thy truth, to lead me securely to thy holy mountain, and to thy tabernacles, where thou dost manifest to thy saints the splendour of thy glory.

3rd Point. Consider—Pilate says to the Jews: "I find no cause in him." (*John*, xviii.) Innocence is a light which the darkness of calumny cannot obscure. The enemies of Jesus exhaust their malice in defaming him, when, by a signal providence his innocence is proclaimed by all creatures. Judas declares he has betrayed just blood; Pilate washes his hands, protesting aloud, he is innocent of it; his wife conjures him to do nothing against this just man; the good thief acknowledges the divinity of Jesus, while he accuses himself; the pagan Centurion, seeing the manner in which the God-man dies, exclaims: Truly this was a just man. Even inanimate nature miraculously deposes in favour of his innocence: the sun is darkened, the earth trembles, the sepulchres open, the rocks break asunder, the veil of the temple is rent—all creation is convulsed, to prove that Jesus dies, not because he is a sinner, but because he is the Holy of Holies, and the Saviour of sinners. Give yourself with a generous devotedness to God, and he will watch over your reputation. He is jealous of the glory of his friends. If you can say, with Jesus: I seek not my own glory, be assured that God will take care of your interests; you shall lose nothing by consigning them into his hands.

O Divine Lamb, who takest away the sins of the world, I unite with all creatures in rendering homage to thy innocence, and confessing my own guilt. O bright and spotless mirror, in thee I behold the deformity of my offences! Create in me, O Jesus, a pure heart! Thou, through whose innocence alone we are purified from every stain.

THURSDAY.

Jesus observes a profound silence before Pilate.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus being accused by the chief priests and the ancients, is silent." (*Matt* xxvii.) It is with reason, says St. Ambrose, that Jesus is silent, because he needs no defence. It belongs to him who fears being overcome, to vindicate himself. But Jesus overcomes his enemies when they condemn him; he is victorious when he is judged. What need has he of speaking before he is judged, since his judgment is a complete victory, according to the testimony of the royal Prophet. For in effect his very judge absolves before he condemns him; and we may say that his silence is the triumph of his innocence. O how wonderful is the force of innocence! It draws its justification even from the mouths of its enemies. When will you do for him what he has done for you? When will you do it for yourself? When suffer an unjust accusation without excuse, abandoning your interest to Divine Providence—suppressing, not only complaints, but even a just defence? This is a rare virtue, that all admire, but few practise. Faint-hearted that I am, when thou, O Lord, art dishonoured, I am mute; and when I am offended, I break forth into a thousand complaints!

2nd Point. Consider—"But Jesus replies not, so that Pilate wondered." (*Mark*, xv.) The silence of Jesus casts Pilate into astonishment. His surprise is just, for this silence is a miracle of patience and meekness above the force of nature. Amongst all the miracles that the Son of God wrought in proof of his divinity, his invincible patience was the most signal. He proved most clearly his divine origin, in imitating the patience of his Eternal Father towards sinners. Such a patience is a characteristic of the Divinity, and by it

the Jews might easily have recognized that of Jesus Christ. If it is so great a miracle in the person of Jesus Christ, to suffer without complaint the dolors and opprobrium of an ignominious death, how great to inspire his disciples with the like courage! O what a grace! What a favour from God! To endure an affront, a calumny, a sensible injury, without complaint, murmur, or defence! This is truly a greater grace than to resuscitate the dead, or work the most stupendous miracles.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus, "who gives speech to the dumb, and makes the tongues of children eloquent," observes a profound silence when he is accused. Silence must be a virtue very precious in his esteem, since being the Increated Wisdom, he yet fears not to expose his life to preserve it. This divine Master teaches us by his example, that it is prudence to be silent, when we treat with persons who will not listen to reason, or who are warm in contesting, for then our advice or justification is useless. It teaches us that a Christian without silence is a city without walls; and that he who guards his tongue preserves his soul; that it is difficult to speak much without committing many faults, and that the best means of repelling our enemies, is to close the mouth, which is the door of the heart. Are you tempted? Enter into yourself; hold yourself in recollection and silence. In fine, it teaches that silence is often more edifying than words; that modesty is a mute sermon; and that we never speak better, than when we have learned the virtue of silence. This virtue, like unto charity, attracts God into the soul. If then you cultivate it, you will gain the heart of the Son of God, who, with his Father, will come unto you, and make you taste the sweetness of his divine presence.

O Jesus! give me a tongue learned and mortified; teach me to speak and to be silent. Give me a tongue

to publish your praises, and give me also an ear to listen silently to the defects of which I am admonished, and to the advice which is given me.

FRIDAY.

Jesus is mocked by Herod.

1st Point. Consider—"And Herod, with his soldiers, despised him, and mocked him, putting on him a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate." (*Luke*, xxiii. 11.) Herod, disappointed by the silence of Jesus, revenges himself by treating him with mockery and scorn. He sends him back to Pilate clothed in a white robe declaring by this mark of derision that he regarded him not as a criminal, but as a fool. How astonishing the blindness of man, who clothes the Increated Wisdom as a fool. Contemplate how this adorable Saviour receives the robe presented to him with his accustomed humility, and suffers with invincible meekness the taunts and scoffs they cast upon him, to teach you to trample on the spirit of the world, to support with patience, contempt and ignominy, should Providence permit you even to be treated as a fool, without giving occasion for it on your part.

Behold your Redeemer going forth from Herod's court clothed as a fool; consider the ignominious outcries with which the rabble receive him. Truly, the Son of God may now say—"I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (*Ps.* xxi. 7.) Truly did the prophet say—"We saw him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him." (*Isaias*, liii. 2.) Oh, that my heart were better disposed to receive and repair all the outrages offered to thee! Enter into it, my Sovereign

Lord, as King of glory, and reign over all my powers with absolute empire.

2nd Point. Consider—the wonderful opposition between the designs of God and the intentions of Herod. This blinded prince pretends to mock the quality of king, and all the titles of honour attributed to the Son of God, by clothing him in this white robe; and the Eternal Father declares, by the whiteness of this garment, the innocence, purity, simplicity, and meekness of his divine Son; and by the persons who invest him with it, he represents his sacerdotal and royal dignity. Admire and adore your Redeemer under this mysterious garb; it teaches you that the grandeur to which he aspires is not the false grandeur of this world, which is but vanity; it is the sublimity of the cross, where he will perform at once the office of king and of sovereign pontiff, to accomplish the work of our redemption. Behold what should be the object of your ambition; the cross and your salvation; the cross for salvation, and salvation by the cross; the cross, to be like unto Jesus crucified; salvation, to be like unto Jesus glorified.

3rd Point. Consider—the Eternal Father thinks on the glory of his Son, and the Son on the salvation of man, whilst man offends him by insupportable contempt. Adam had lost the robe of original innocence, together with that of immortality, in the terrestrial paradise. Jesus recovers the former in the court of Herod, the latter in the pretorium of Pilate: the one amidst opprobrium, the other amidst pain. He restores to you that of innocence in this life, and promises you that of immortality, but on condition that you preserve the first until death. He demands if you have preserved the grace received in baptism, or if you have repaired its loss by penance. Beware of appearing before him without this robe at the day of your death, lest you be shamefully driven from the nuptial feast, and condemned

to exterior darkness. Live holily, in order to die happily, live in the fear of God, that you may die in his love; live in his grace, that you may enter after death into the glory of his elect.

O King of heaven, who hath redeemed this precious robe of innocence at the expense of thy honour and thy life, never suffer me to lose it by any mortal offence, or sully it by my imperfections or defects. Ah! what confusion to have heretofore lost it by tepidity, and to be still so little careful of preserving it, surrounded as I am with enemies, who only seek to despoil me of it, that they may mock my loss. O what a misfortune, should I fall again into their hands and if death should surprise me, stripped of thy grace! O shameful nakedness! O confusion worse than death, and more horrible than hell itself!

SATURDAY.

The efforts of Pilate to deliver Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—"Pilate having called the chief-priests, and the magistrates, and the people, said to them: You have presented unto me this man, as one that perverteth the people, and behold I, having examined him before you, find no cause in this man in those things wherein you accuse him. No, nor Herod neither." (*Luke*, xxiii. 13.) Pilate seeing Jesus return, was on one side glad, because this reciprocal deference of Herod was a commencement of their reconciliation; but he is again perplexed at being obliged either to oppose the cruelty of the Jews, or to act against his conscience. The violence with which they pursue defenceless innocence, excites his compassion. He assembles the chief-priests and magistrates, declaring with firmness that he found Jesus guiltless of all the crimes

of which they accused him. Draw instructions from his example. Have pity on the destitute and abandoned poor. On the prisoner who pines in his dungeon. On the bashful poor, who suffer in silence the extremity of want. On the sick, who languish without succour or consolation. On the virtuous, who are persecuted for justice' sake. Finally, have pity on sinners, and implore their conversion. Be zealous to withdraw them from the slavery of the devil, for truly they are of all miserable persons the most worthy of compassion. But, above all, have pity on your own soul; and if you are merciful towards others, be not cruel to yourself.

2nd Point. Consider—Pilate leading forth Barabbas from prison, and Jesus from the pretorium, presents both to the people, saying: "Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?" (*Matt.* xxvii. 17.) Astonishing spectacle! The only Son of God is compared with an infamous murderer. O profound humility of Jesus, who deigns to suffer this comparison! O vanity of man, who being but a little dust, cannot, without indignation, endure the least contradiction from an inferior! We readily say that we are nothing; but we think and act quite the contrary. Barabbas finds protectors and Jesus finds none. Art thou not, divine Jesus, the advocate and consoler of the afflicted? And yet in thy affliction, thou art abandoned by all. Who is not surprised at the justice of human judgment on this occasion, bestowing pardon to the robber, and the cross to the Saviour? Nevertheless, of this we are daily guilty; for when we yield to the suggestions of passion, we prefer Barabbas to Jesus.

O increated Wisdom and eternal Truth! redress my judgment and correct my thoughts. Thou who holdest in all things a just balance, suffer not that I should renounce thee for a nothing—thou who valuest my soul above thy own life, which is of infinite price.

3rd Point. Consider—"What shall I then do with

Jesus, who is called Christ? They say all: Let him be crucified." (*Matt.* xxvii. 22.) How merciful art thou O God, who drawest good out of evil. This murderous cry is a great crime in the Jews, but a great grace for us. What would the death of Barabbas have availed us, whose blood could efface no stain from our souls? But the blood of Jesus can wash away all the sins of the world.

I behold, O Lord, two men presented at thy tribunal the Man-God and the sinner; thou demandest of thy mercy and of thy justice: "Which of the two wilt thou that I deliver to thee?" and they loudly reply "Crucify the Man-God, and save the sinner." Crucify the Man-God, says justice, and I shall be perfectly satisfied. Save the sinner, exclaims mercy, and I shall be content. You ask again: What evil hath this Man-God done? And they confess that he hath done no evil, but that he hath charged himself with all our crimes. Hereupon, O infinite Mercy! thou pronouncest sentence against the innocent, in favour of the criminal. The Man-God is crucified; and the sinner, absolved by his death, regains the right of thy eternal kingdom. O man, what wilt thou render to the eternal Father, who hath given thee his only Son? What wilt thou render to the Son, who hath loved thee, and washed thee from thy sins in his blood?

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Jesus is condemned to be scourged.

1st Point. Consider—"Then, therefore, Pilate took Jesus, and scourged him." (*John*, xix.) O strange subversion! Innocence is judged, and the guilty exercises judgment. Pilate, who has not courage to sustain justice, would at least preserve its form. He

ascends his tribunal to pronounce sentence. Jesus receives it standing, with profound humility, and, by his silence, acquiesces in what he regards as proceeding from the lips of his eternal Father. The modesty of his countenance, the rays of charity that beam from his eyes, would be capable of softening the very rocks; the dignity of the divine person shines forth through all the obloquy that overwhelms him; but could we penetrate that sacred heart, we would there behold with what reverence he submits to the order of divine justice, with what meek obedience he says: O my Father! I am ready to receive the scourge from whatever hand thou art pleased to ordain. Are these the sentiments of your soul? Is your heart like that of Jesus, submissive to the orders of God? Are you ready to receive from the hand of this good Father whatever chastisement he pleases? Receive all as coming from him; accept it with humility; support it with courage; draw from it your own sanctification, the edification of your neighbour, and the glory of God.

2nd Point. Consider—in the pretorium of Pilate the Man-God becomes a spectacle to angels and men, naked as a worm of the earth, exposed to the laughter of a vile populace. O astonishing spectacle! Hast not thou, my Saviour, clothed the heavens with light, and nature with all its beauty? Whence then art thou naked? An excess of mercy has despoiled him, that he may clothe us with the ornaments of grace and virtue, which we lost in the terrestrial paradise. Preserve with tender gratitude this precious pledge of his love. Beware of again forfeiting this robe of grace, which he has so charitably restored to you. Fly sin, which alone can deprive you of it. Dare not to present yourself at the table of the Lord in the holy communion, nor at his tribunal at the hour of death, destitute of this ornament of the children of God The nakedness of your soul would render it hateful in his sight, and cover you with eternal opprobrium.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus would animate us by his example, to the combat which the Christian soldier must continually sustain, not against a visible enemy, but with spirits replete with artifice and malice. Therefore it is necessary that we strip ourselves of the old Adam, that is, our perverse inclinations, which are the weapons they use against us. Jesus traces for us a model of this spiritual nakedness, by that which he suffers in his sacred body. We desire to be clothed with the new Adam, without relinquishing the corrupt propensities of nature; but that is impossible. We must fly, like Joseph, leaving our mantle, by which the flesh and the world would hold us, in order to insure a victory. So long as you are attached to such a vanity, such an interest, such a liberty of the senses, not conformable to the interior law, you will always be in danger. Fear not to renounce the pleasures, honours, or consolations of the world, which are only an occasion of sin. Say, with the victorious martyrs whom the tyrant had stripped to plunge into a frozen lake: "We give thee thanks, divine Redeemer, for this opportunity of cancelling our sins in casting off these garments. By the malice of the serpent we were condemned to wear them, and we are delivered from that penalty through the grace of Jesus Christ."

MONDAY.

Jesus is bound at the pillar, and cruelly scourged.

1st Point. Consider—"Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and scourged him." (*John*, xix.) "Why then is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me." (*Isaiah*, lxiii. 2, 3.) "Truly he hath borne our infirmities,

and hath carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted." (*Isaiah*, liii.) Ah, Lord, whence are those wounds, and the blood which flows from all the members of thy sacred body, so livid and disfigured by the frightful stripes thou hast received, that thou seemest as a leper, and as a man stricken by God in the excess of his wrath? Whence hath the well-beloved of the *Eternal Father* become accessible to violence and torments? Truly no other than himself could permit it. He hath voluntarily exposed himself to the fury of his enemies, that by the excess of his sufferings he may manifest the infinitude of his love. O my soul! adore these wounds of love, they are the visible characters of charity. Consider how valuable thy soul must be in the esteem of Jesus; acknowledge what thou owest for a grace so infinite, and compare thy immortified sensuality with the price of thy ransom. O prodigy of love! The Holy of Holies is scourged for the impious; the just for the guilty; innocence itself for crime; the Incarnate Wisdom for folly; life for the sinner, who has deserved eternal death.

2nd Point. Consider—"O all you who pass the way, attend, and see if there be sorrow like unto my sorrow." (*Lam.*) Be astonished, O ye heavens! Blessed spirits who know the holiness of this innocent victim, be abyssed in sorrow. O my soul! if his wounds touch not thy heart, thou art more obdurate than the rocks. Approach the pillar, ungrateful and insensible soul, and behold how this innocent Lamb is mangled, who hath committed no crime, but hath taken upon him the chastisement due to thy offences, that thou mayest be pardoned. They tear his skin, they open all his veins, they pluck his hair, they break his nerves, they penetrate his very bowels, the ground is strewn with his sacred flesh, and saturated with his blood. Amidst this carnage, the innocent Jesus opens not his mouth.

he silently weeps, whilst his sacred body is lacerated by the cruel scourge. He says not, it is enough: he would suffer still more were it necessary, to obtain your salvation, and touch your heart. He himself gives power to the barbarous hand of the executioner, and will soften nothing of its rigour. Alas! if Jesus has so many enemies who persecute and outrage him, shall he find no one to console him? How dare you henceforth ask him to have pity on you, if you have no pity for him?

3rd Point. Consider—"He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins, the chastisement of our peace is upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." (*Isaiah*, liii. 5.) Seek no more the cause of this cruel treatment which the Son of God undergoes at the pillar. It is our sins that rend his flesh: he will have the scourge to open all his veins, and make his body a universal wound, because of our unbounded malice and corruption. O Christian! behold this bleeding body, sustained by miracle amid the excess of violence; in his wounds as in so many mirrors, contemplate the multitude and deformity of thy sins.

O infinitely merciful Redeemer, I have sinned, and thou hast borne the penalty! If thou complainest not of thy executioners, thou mayest complain of me, who unceasingly inflict on thee innumerable wounds by evil thoughts, uncharitable words, and unworthy actions. My God, whilst my intolerable offences pierce thee to the heart, the chastisements which thy mercy imparts to me, carry balm to the wound which they inflict. Ah! what should I not fear, if I abuse thy mercy by continuing to offend thee?

TUESDAY.

Jesus suffering at the pillar.

1st Point. Consider—"I will chastise him therefore, and release him." (*Luke*, xxiii. 22.) Jesus is the infallible rule of wisdom; how then can he be corrected? The scourge is the punishment of slaves, and Jesus is the only Son of God; why then shall he suffer so degrading a punishment? It is because he has taken upon himself to atone for the sins of the world. There are three practices of penance, without which we cannot advance in virtue—confusion, subjection, and pain. We fly confusion, and there are few persons who suffer contempt with a truly Christian humility. Subjection is opposed to our self-judgment and will; it is with difficulty we submit and make a sacrifice of them. Pain renders us impatient; and it is but too true, as St. Paul says, that no one hates his body and mortifies his flesh, without doing violence to nature. This violence, nevertheless, is necessary for all those who would serve God and labour for their sanctification. Therefore Jesus, who knew at once the necessity and the difficulty, would give us such an admirable example in his flagellation, and by it merit for us a special grace to imitate him. He would bear the confusion of being exposed naked to the mockery of an insolent rabble, to teach us to embrace contempt. He would be bound with hard cords, to teach us the practice of obedience. He would be cruelly scourged, to encourage us to subdue our flesh, and to support with constancy the trials and afflictions it shall please his eternal Father to appoint us.

2nd Point. Consider—Pilate "having scourged Jesus, delivered him to them!" (*Matt.* xxvii. 26.) It is charity that has stripped, bound, and wounded him, and this charity should, after his example, bind, wound, and strip you of all attachment to creatures, and love

of yourself. Rank yourself, then, near the pillar to which the Angel of the great Council is fastened. It is the standard of his love, the throne of his mercy; it is the pillar of the desert, which enlightens devoted souls, that protects and leads them securely, by a holy violence, into the promised land.

O my Sovereign Good! what can repay this precious blood, the price of my ransom? O my Master, who will give me to suffer something for thee? Let the continual mortification of my senses be the pillar to which I shall fasten my body, to render it submissive to the spirit.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus despoiled of his garments, teaches you to walk by a naked faith, and to support the privation of interior light when it is withdrawn. O how sensible is this nakedness of spirit! how difficult to sustain! The bonds that fastened him to the pillar, teach you to detach yourself from creatures, resting not on them, but attaching yourself to God alone, who is your protector, your support, and the centre of all your hopes. O how heroic, but how rare, is this confidence! These bleeding wounds which the scourge has inflicted on his sacred body, demonstrate that there cannot be love without suffering, and that suffering cannot be supported without love. If, then, you love, prove it by a generosity that is willing to undergo every suffering, even by shedding the last drop of your blood.

Adorable Spouse of perfect souls, when shall I be so united to thee, that every thought and feeling may be referred to thee alone? When shall thy love render me perfectly poor, by despoiling me of every human sentiment and earthly affection? When shall it pierce my heart with a wound so profound, that dying to myself, I may live for thee alone, who wert wounded for me even unto death.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus is unbound from the pillar.

1st POINT. Consider—Then Pilate, "having scourged Jesus, delivered him unto them." (*Matt.* xxvii.) Behold your Saviour unbound from the pillar, extended on the earth, bathed in his blood, combating the prince of this world, and triumphing over the powers of darkness. Now is fulfilled that description of the prophet: "From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no sound part." (*Isaias*, liii. 4.) He is become as a "leper," from the multitude of his wounds. He is given up for a time to the power of Satan, who exercises on him his infernal fury. My enemy "hath gathered together his fury against me, and threatening, he hath gnashed with his teeth upon me; my enemy hath beheld me with terrible eyes.....God hath shut me up with the unjust man, and hath delivered me into the hands of the wicked.....He hath compassed me round about with his lances, he hath wounded my loins, he hath not spared, and hath poured out my bowels on the earth. He hath torn me with wound upon wound; he hath rushed in upon me like a giant." (*Job*, xvi.) Take courage, afflicted soul, be not dismayed; though all hell unite in persecuting you, they can do nothing but as God permits, and he will permit only that which is for your good.

2nd POINT. Consider—Jesus, the unspotted sanctity of God, becomes the victim of sinners. Contemplate him imbrued in his blood, and so exhausted with pain that it is with difficulty he rises from the ground. His sufferings are alone surpassed by his mercies. Behold, while the blood flows from his wounds, how the balm of charity is poured forth from his sacred heart. O inconceivable mercy of our Saviour! Truly, O Lord, thy sufferings are excessive, and the malice of man calls for

thy indignation: yet, after all, the measure of their iniquities cannot be compared with the measure of thy mercy. It is this gives me confidence to approach thee, and gather in the vessel of my heart this precious blood so profusely shed. O blood that washeth away all the iniquities of the earth, efface the stains of my soul, and never suffer it to lose that purity thou hast so compassionately restored. O Father of mercies, I offer the blood of thy Son for my ransom. I acknowledge, with confusion, that I am a sinner, incapable of satisfying thy justice, either by my sorrow or by the rigours of austerity. But "look upon the face of thy Christ," who offers for me a sacrifice of atonement. He opens not his lips to complain of my ingratitude, but his heart pleads in my favour, his eyes weep for my crimes, and his veins are drained to purity them. O God! I ask in his name what I cannot merit; and since he has assumed all my miseries, deign to shed on me, through him, thy mercies.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus prays both for his friends and enemies. We must love him, if we desire to participate in the fruit of his prayer. Behold the pitiable condition to which his love for you, and the desire of attracting your love, have reduced him. Such is the object of his sufferings, the subject of his prayers, the completion of his wishes. Would you know what should be the extent of your love—consider how much he has loved you, even to the shedding of his blood and expiring on a cross; and were it necessary to press the executioners to hasten his torments, he would as willingly say, as he did to the traitor: "What thou doest, do quickly."

O Jesus, my salvation and my life, so great is the love thou bearest me, that thy only ambition seems to be, to restore me to life by thy own suffering and death. O my soul, think seriously how thou shouldst love him who so ardently desires to die for thee.

THURSDAY.

Jesus is clothed with a robe of mockery.

1st Point. Consider—"And stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him." (*Mark*, xxvii. 28.) Contemplate the Son of the living God in this doubly dyed robe of purple, with which the soldiers clothe him, in mockery of his royal dignity. Their intention is to insult, while in the designs of the Holy Spirit they shadow forth a profound mystery, which teaches us that Jesus is king of heaven and earth, of Jew and gentile; king both as God and man, who promises to his subjects a double robe of glory for soul and body.

O King of glory! I adore thee in thy humiliation, as in the splendour of thy majesty. Thou wouldst hide thy sovereign grandeur under this abjection, to give me an example of profound humility. I purpose, with thy divine grace, henceforth to prize confusion and the contempt of men, as much as I shall undervalue their esteem, that I may be like unto thee, and that bearing the livery of thy annihilation, I may one day be a partaker of thy eternal glory.

2nd Point. Consider—the soldiers join insult to cruelty. They are cruel in stripping Jesus of his clothes, which the blood has caused so to adhere to the skin, that the flesh is torn off, and his wounds opened once more. They are insolent, in casting on him a vile purple garment, deriding him as a mock king. O inhuman executioners! you need not seek a robe of purple to satisfy your cruelty; his own garment is already purpled in his precious blood. This God of armies has chosen a new manner of warfare. Men engaged in combat endeavour to wound their enemies and defend themselves; he, on the contrary, displays his strength in bearing the stripes to save those who wound him.

O Lord! thou wearest a robe of purple, to deliver us from those flames with which the reprobate shall be for ever invested. You wear it to deliver us from the tainted garment of sin with which we were covered. You wear it to fortify your servants, and to sustain them in their weakness. Who durst henceforth complain, seeing thee treated with such indignity? Who durst resent an injury, seeing thee so cruelly outraged?

3rd Point. Consider—"They cast upon him a scarlet cloak." (*John*, xix. 2.) Behold the most glorious conqueror, decked in his robe of triumph, walking in the power of his majesty! The conquerors of this world gain but a point of earth as the fruit of their victory, but Jesus bears away Paradise by his valour, and the kingdom of heaven is the object of his conquest. Others are strong in the multitude of their soldiers, but Jesus is victorious by the multitude of his wounds. His arms are silence, humility, prayers, tears; and the royal purple with which he is invested is his sacred humanity five times dyed in his blood: first, in his circumcision; secondly, in his agony in the garden; thirdly, at the pillar; fourthly, in the pretorium; and lastly, on the cross.

O Christian, who aspirest to the conquest of heaven, look upon the robe of your chief: it is stained with blood; if you will follow him, you must not spare yours. The kingdom he promises as the fruit of your combats is not of this world; but nevertheless, you must combat in this world, and combat against it. To bear away the victory, you must do violence to yourself. You shall not enter into heaven, if you bear not his livery; and if you are not so happy as to bear the purple of martyrdom, you must be clothed in that of charity, which suffers all things for him who has loved you even unto death.

O Jesus, who knowest my weakness, grant that the remembrance of thy wounds may so animate me in all

difficulties, that my joy and my glory may be to participate in the opprobrium and dolour of thy sacred passion.

FRIDAY.

Jesus is crowned with thorns.

1st Point. Consider—"And the soldiers platting a crown of thorns, put it upon his head." (*John*, xix. 2.) Why does the blush of shame burn on his countenance? Why do these silent tears mingle with that stream of blood which gushes from his brow? Why is that glance turned upwards in supplication? Recall the hours and the days devoted to pride and vain glory, and it will explain the mystery of those thorns. Remember the sins which ought to have made you the scorn of all creatures, and they will proclaim to you, that he could not become your representative without being covered with confusion before God and man. Reflect on your present obduracy, and you will not be surprised at those tears, nor at the necessity you are under of having such an advocate to pray for you. But that crown teaches another lesson also, for our life being a continued course of cares and pains, Jesus has taken them upon himself, that we may, without disquietude devote ourselves to his service. We may say, with the prophet Ezechiel, there are no longer on the earth thorns to wound us, if we render available the crown which encircles the Redeemer. O sacred thorns, pierce my insensible heart with a true feeling of the dolours of my Master and my King.

2nd Point. Consider—"If, indeed, you mean to make me king, come ye and rest under my shadow: but if you mean it not, let fire come out from the bramble, and devour the cedars of Libanus." (*Judges*,

ix. 15.) Let us, then, take refuge under the shadow of his thorns. We shall there find security against temptation, and repose in all our difficulties. Jesus makes choice of a crown, not of flowers, but of thorns. How shameful would it be to see delicate members under a thorny head. Under the shadow of these thorns the saints sought their repose. St. Catherine of Sienna chose a crown of thorns in this life, reserving that of gold for eternity.

Let us imitate the example of the saints, and adopt their sentiments, lest the Son of God being angry, the fire of his indignation should involve us with the reprobate, when he will say to them in his wrath: "Begone, ye accursed, into eternal flames." (*Matt.* xxv. 41.)

3rd POINT. Consider—by the crown of thorns, the crown of glory is to be attained. By patience we shall gain the empire over our passions, and arrive at eternal beatitude. Thus has Jesus acquired a heavenly diadem. He would not be adored by angels as king of glory, before he had been condemned to the cross as king of the Jews. If, in return, you will offer yourself to his service, let your oblation in as much as possible, resemble his. Consider that "God is the head" of Jesus Christ, but he is hidden under thorns. You must pass through these in order to find him, if you desire to gather the flower of beatitude in his bosom. Fear not the thorns that surround him. Their sharp and piercing points will serve to defend you, and wound your enemies. If peril menace, if temptation press, make this thorn-crowned head your shield. Are you tempted by vanity? Do the senses allure? Let your rebellious passions feel the point of these thorns. In fine, have recourse to Jesus in all your pains; repose under his protection, as Elias under his juniper tree; you will there find the bread of life, in the strength of which you will arrive at the mountain of Horeb, and enter

into the clear vision of God; where for a crown of thorns, you will receive in recompense, one of immortal glory, which is the object of your desires, and the end of your life.

Adorable Saviour! let the fire of thy divine love consume in me the thorns of sin; and grant that this earthly heart on which thy sacred blood hath flowed, may become fruitful in good works. Then shall all the powers of my soul bless thee, O divine Lamb, who takest away the sins of the world!

SATURDAY

Jesus bears a reed instead of a sceptre.

1st Point. Consider—"And platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand." (*Matt.* xxvii.) The soldiers present a reed to the Son of God, in mockery of his empire, which they esteem imaginary and vain. They wish to exhibit him as king of fools. O sacred folly of divine love! O king of holy penitents, who pass for fools in the opinion of the world! what excess of charity obliges you to bear the confusion which our ambition and love of honour have merited? Yet this is the sceptre which has subdued the haughtiness of the proud, and crushed them as earthen vessels. It is in appearance a weak reed agitated by the winds, because its servants are subject to persecution, disgrace, and affliction in this life; but it is in effect more firm than iron, for its strength is invincible, and its duration eternal.

O Christian soul, who seekest the support of creatures, instead of fixing thy hope in God, on what dost thou rely? By what counsel, or rather by what folly, dost thou prefer thy own strength to the divine assistance? Ah! thou leanest on a broken reed; when

thou expectest its support, it will break and pierce thy hand.

2nd Point. Consider—Nothing is more frail than man; he is as a withered leaf on an autumnal tree, that the least wind casts upon the earth; he is an infirm reed, that every breath of temptation prostrates. Beg of Jesus, who is the virtue of the eternal Father, and the power of his arm, to take you under his protection, and govern you according to his will. He was pleased to bear the reed, to prove himself the support of your weakness. "He has taken the reed," says St. Athanasius, "when the devil, not knowing that he whetted a sword against himself, presented it." But in subduing the power of our enemy, he has strengthened our weakness, quickened our courage, and rendered us invincible to all the efforts of hell.

3rd Point. Consider—"They took the reed, and struck his head." (*Matt.* xxvii. 30.) What are you come to see in the pretorium of Pilate? "A reed shaken by the wind." (*Matt.* xi. 7.) It is true, your levity and inconstancy are alike unto the reed which Jesus bears in his hand, because he suffers the pain and confusion of it for your deliverance. Behold how the soldiers place the reed in his hand, and then taking it, strike him on the head. It is of this you are guilty, when having consecrated your soul, your judgment, your will, your inclinations, and all your powers, to God, you so soon retract. You form good purposes in prayer, and you forget them the next hour. At the feet of your confessor you resolve to moderate your tongue, to repress your anger, to be more faithful and exact in your duties, yet, on the first occasion, all your protestations vanish.

O how displeasing is this infidelity to Jesus Christ! Remember that you offend him more deeply by your levity and inconstancy, than did the soldiers in striking him on the head with the reed.

My God, since I am but a reed, take me under thy protection, that nothing henceforth may detach me from thy service. Behold my poor soul void of charity, dry and withered in devotion, having nothing but the show of words, without the fruit of good works. I beseech thee, O good Jesus! as thou hast mercifully taken upon thyself my weakness, that thou wouldst impart to me thy strength. Then shall I bless thy name, and exclaim in the joy of my heart: this is the work of the right hand of the Most High. I am a reed, but Jesus is my strength and my virtue; preserve me, then, my Saviour, and let thy grace never abandon me.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

The soldiers bending the knee before Jesus, salute him in mockery, as King of the Jews.

1st Point. Consider—"And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews." (*Matt* xxvii. 29.) Behold the king of eternal glory scoffed by an insolent rabble! And yet, O meek and patient Lord, you reply not, you show forth no mark of indignation. O my soul! let us learn to praise our King, not only with the lips, but with the heart; and in reparation for these impious salutations, let us say with the church:

O Jesus, my King and my God! I salute and adore thee with the most profound respect, in the sincerity of my soul. As thou alone hast compassion on our miseries, I will love only thee, and seek but thy glory. O my Redeemer, in acknowledgment for all thy favours, and that patience with which thou hast borne so much contempt for love of me, I sacrifice myself and all that is most dear to me, protesting before thy heavenly court,

that thou alone shalt possess my heart, who art my only refuge, and my sovereign good!

2nd Point. Consider—"They spit on his face." (*Mark*, xv. 19.) The impiety of man can only be surpassed by the patience of Jesus. See their foul spittle mingled with his sacred blood. Adding cruelty to ignominy, after scoffing and deriding the Son of the living God, they spit upon that face which the angels adore, and striking his sacred head, force the thorns deeper into his wounded brow. Contemplate this Man-God, this man of sorrows, who amidst so many injuries, remains immoveable as the rock beaten by the waves of the ocean; compare this invincible meekness with your impatience under the slightest suffering. Elevate your thoughts to the sacred heart of Jesus, and admire the intense charity with which he suffers so much for such ungrateful creatures. Descend, by reflection, on your own sins, and with profound sorrow call to mind your voluntary distractions in prayer, your coldness and sloth in the divine presence; above all, the absence of that spirit of faith which should animate all the powers of your soul in approaching the adorable eucharist. Consider those uncharitable words, those keen sarcasms so opposed to fraternal charity. In fine, acknowledge the share you have had in the torments of Jesus. The Gentiles, when they insult, do not veil his face as did the Jews, because he was to hide himself from these, and discover himself to those. To you, O Christian soul, Jesus discovers his sufferings, that they may be the ordinary subject of your meditations. Never lose the remembrance of them, nor of your own sins, which have reduced him to so pitiable a condition. Bear them always in mind and heart, as he bore the piercing crown even unto death.

3rd Point. Look again upon that crown; the saints could only view it with eyes dimmed with emotion. Is there no throb of pity in your ungenerous heart? Is

it because you have platted the thorns you should not mourn for the pain they give? Is it because yours was the hand that pressed them deeper in that brow, that you view them with an eye of stone? Is it because you have forgotten him so long, that every affection of your soul should not now centre in Him? His brow is blue and livid from the blows he has received, red with his blood, stained with the verdure of the reed with which he was stricken, and fouled with spittle. Ah! be not so cruel as to renew his dolours by sin. Spare your head; you have the honour to be one of its members. You wound it by your idle and vain thoughts, your irregular desire of honour, your solicitude about earthly things, your curiosity in what regards not your own duties, and above all by that sloth which has caused the spiritual langour which, during so many years, prevented the movements of grace, that would draw you to the performance of good works.

Pardon, O divine Redeemer! all the opprobrium and sorrow that I have hitherto caused thee to suffer. O sacred Head, let one drop of this precious blood which thy wounds distil, one of these tears which the violence of torture draws from thy eyes, fall upon my callous heart, to purify and change its tepidity into holy desires, that will lead me promptly and without delay to the exercise of penance and the practice of virtue.

MONDAY.

"Jesus came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and purple garment; and Pilate saith to them: "Behold the Man." (*John*, xix. 5.)

1st Point. Consider these words: "Behold the Man." O Son of Man, to what a state has love reduced you, since the most humane of your judges believes he

does you a favour in treating you with ignominy and cruelty hitherto unknown. "Behold the Man" (*John*, xix. 5.) Pilate, desiring to soften the fury of the Jews, leads Jesus forth, his head crowned with thorns, his face swollen with blows and fouled with spittle, all his members bleeding and trembling. Then raising the purple robe, and exposing his naked body, all torn and covered with wounds, he says to them, with mingled pity and contempt: "Behold the Man." O Pilate! you do well to declare that he is a man; for he could scarcely be recognised as such. O hearts harder than adamant, shall not the gushing wounds of the innocent victim who is charged with the execration due to your sins, suffice to soften you?

"Behold the Man." O Jesus, I behold thee a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. Thou wouldst be treated thus, to save me from that confusion which I have cause to fear when my sins shall be manifested before thy dread tribunal. Efface them, O Lord, in thy precious blood, hide them in thy wounds, and suffer not that I be confounded, who have placed my confidence in thee.

2nd Point. Consider—"Behold the Man." Behold the mirror in which the Eternal Father discovers to men the abyss of his mercy, the abyss of his justice, and the abyss of their malice. He has not spared his only Son to deliver his slaves. Infinite mercy! This beloved Son having charged himself with our sins, he exacts the debt in all its rigour. Infinite justice! And nevertheless, instead of fearing his judgments, or being touched with his goodness, we offend him for a nothing, we wound him in cold blood. Excess of malice! "Behold the Man." Behold thyself, O sinner, in this mirror. See in this sacred body, covered with wounds, the melancholy state of thy soul. These thorns indicate the remorse that rends thy criminal conscience; this reed reproaches thee with thy levity and inconstancy;

this spittle, this blood, these mortal wounds which lacerate his body, are a figure of the crimes with which thy soul has been stained. When wilt thou begin to do penance? "Behold the Man." If the Son of God is thus treated, has not the slave cause to tremble? If innocence is punished for the guilty, can the guilty hope for impunity? "Behold the Man." Behold him who is to judge me, and who will one day appear as terrible in his majesty as he is now meek in his humiliation. He will then judge those who now judge and despise him.

3rd Point. Consider—"Behold the Man." Go forth, daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals and of his joy, exclaims St. Bernard. O what a king! what a diadem! what a day of joy and of espousals! It is the day of his espousals, for he has not spared to shed his blood in order to cement his union with your soul; it is the day of his joy, for his joy is to restore your life by laying down his own. "Behold the Man." Jesus is the head of the blessed in heaven, and also of those who are still pilgrims upon earth. He is one and the same head; but he shows himself differently to each. He manifests himself to the blessed as he now is, that is to say, crowned with glory, that they may be like unto him. He manifests himself to the pilgrim as he was heretofore, that is to say, crowned with thorns, that he may become the imitator of his sufferings. O what a reproach, to be so little conformable to this model! He embraces ignominy, and we desire honour and esteem. He accepts sufferings, and we seek the gratification of our senses. He cherishes poverty, and we would not be deprived of any convenience. He assumes the cross and thorns as his portion, and we love our own ease, we would withdraw ourselves from every care, and seek our own satisfaction in all things. Behold yourself in this mirror

of humility, patience, charity, mortification, and all sanctity. You will see that instead of walking in his path, you go by a way quite opposite, without considering where it leads.

Eternal Father, "Behold the Man," through whom I hope for thy mercy. Consider what he has done and suffered to appease thy wrath. Thou showest him to me in this state, that I may enter into myself, and discover the wounds of my soul; and I present him to thee to move thee to pity my misery. O Father of mercies, look upon the face of thy divine Son, and in consideration of his wounds, blot out my sins.

TUESDAY.

"*Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made; taking water, washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man: look you to it.*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 24.)

1st Point. Consider—"Then, therefore, he delivered him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led him forth." (*John*, xix. 16.) The executioners seize on Jesus as a man abandoned to their power. This meek lamb makes no resistance, because the same love that brought him down from heaven, obliges him to suffer this violence, lest your soul, at the moment of death, should be delivered to the powers of darkness. What outrage and insult do they not overwhelm him with, now that he is given up to their will! With what sorrow does the Blessed Virgin behold her divine Son receive the sentence of death, and see him seized on by his enemies, in sight of all the people! When she saw Pilate wash his hands, and heard the fatal imprecation of the Jews, how did the sword of sorrow pierce her soul! How is her more than maternal heart

agonized, in seeing her only treasure torn from her by these miscreants, while she is unable to afford him aid! Let us bless for ever the charity of the Son and the Mother, who at so great a price would purchase our ransom.

2nd Point. Consider—"They took off the purple from him, and put his own garments on him." (*Matt.* xxvii. 31.) As often as Jesus is stripped, so often are all his wounds renewed. The pain is sensible, but the confusion is still more. The design of his enemies in stripping him, is to increase his confusion. But the design of the Holy Ghost immediately regards us. He would teach us by this mystery, that to suffer and bear the cross with Jesus, we must be stripped, like him, of all worldly affections, which is a strange robe, and be clothed in the divine love and grace with which God covered the first man. But observe, although he casts off the purple, he does not remove the thorny crown, because being the victim of the world, it is necessary that he should continue to bear his crown. Imitate your Saviour, in bearing during time the crown of thorns, if you will bear that of glory in eternity. Hitherto the way to heaven was closed by thorns, which prevented sinners from entering. Now that the Son of God has taken them to close the road to hell, whence comes it that sinners run blindly thereon, without being held back either by fear or shame?

3rd Point. Consider—"And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary." (*John*, xix. 17.) At length Jesus comes forth from the pretorium, and descends the steps of the palace; at a little distance the cross is laid upon him. It is the altar on which he is to be immolated as the victim, not of the temple but of the world. It is the throne of his love, the instrument of his mercies, the trophy of his victories, which he has chosen from eternity. It is the magnet which has attracted him from heaven, as the

cherished object of his desires, and the end of all his labours What then was the sentiment of his soul, seeing himself so near to that which he had sought for all his life? Who can express how graciously he received it? O what a glory for the cross to be laid on those sacred shoulders, and to be exalted to so high a degree of honour!

O cross, more precious than gold, thou shalt no longer be the torment of criminals, but the triumph of saints! Since the Saviour has sanctified thee by his embraces, all his elect cherish and venerate thee. I too, however late—however faint the homage—do now prostrate myself with reverence before thee. Though in the day of worldly vanity I have blushed at thee, though in the hour of pleasure I have fled from thee, though in the time of trial I have cast thee from me—though even when I returned to thee, called by the victim who forgot me not in his agony, I have received thee with cold indifference—henceforth thou shalt be the only object of my glory, the only source of my pleasure, the only idol of my affections. It is true, O Victim of love, that I have nothing to offer on this thy altar, but I will at least come to supplicate before it; and in the midst of my spiritual poverty, it will be a consolation, to think that I have chosen it as my sweet home, and the centre of my repose on earth.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus carries his Cross.

1st Point. Consider—"And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary." (*John*, xix. 17.) This great spectacle, which the impious deride, is a mystery worthy the admiration of angels and men, as St. Augustin observes. Jesus bears

the wood of torture, which is a great ignominy; but he changes this gibbet into a royal sceptre that the monarchs of the earth shall one day adore. This is an incomparable triumph. He walks as a criminal with two thieves, and holds the lowest rank as the most guilty. This is a great outrage; but in this state he bears the iniquities of the world, and saves sinners, which is an inconceivable glory. He, the Holy of Holies, is associated with robbers, and he disdains not their company; on the contrary, he looks upon them with an eye of love, and approaches to them with an extreme condescension. This, in the eyes of the proud, is baseness; but in it the faithful behold an act of courage and charity altogether heroic and divine, which teaches that Jesus does not despise sinners, that he looks upon them with compassion, that he bears them in his heart and in his thoughts, and desires that they should look reciprocally upon him. Jesus carrying his cross, is an object of compunction, which should make us enter into ourselves, and impress us profoundly with sorrow for having offended him, since it is our sins that render his cross so heavy; with confusion for our coldness and tepidity in his service, which is more sensible to him than the cross itself; with humiliation at the sight of our pusillanimity, which makes us fly the cross.

2nd Point. Consider—that this divine Victim, like the good shepherd, bears us with his cross upon his shoulders. O what consolation! This loving Father makes us repose upon his shoulders, whilst he bends under the weight of his own cross and ours. He is not content with carrying our sins, he also bears our miseries; and exhibits a miracle of strength, patience, and love, to comfort and encourage us. O what love does it demand to bear our weakness and miseries, and support all our defects!

Christian soul, sheep of the fold of Joseph, have con-

fidence, Jesus bears you on his shoulders. Fear not, he is strong enough to carry your cross; and if he desires that you carry it with him, he will supply you with fortitude and courage. Weigh the words which he addressed to St. Ignatius, when he appeared to him on his way to Rome, bearing the cross: I will be favourable to you in Rome. How sweet are those promises, when God favours a soul with a taste of them amidst pains and sufferings!

3rd Point. Consider—our King walking before us. Behold the model proposed to us. We must imitate it. There are some who reject the cross; there are some who bear it willingly; some with cowardice, hardly raising it from the earth; and there are some who bear it generously. Consider in which class you rank: be persuaded that every one meets the cross, even those who reject it. The faithful soul bears it, but to the tepid it is a heavy burden. Blessed are those who, in a spirit of love, bear the cross with Jesus. The cross, without our crucified Jesus, is hard; it is an evil without consolation or fruit. But with Jesus it is a sweet and gentle yoke, soothed by the consolations of heaven; a burden which grace renders not only light but pleasant. Bear then the cross after him, bear it generously as he did, bear it devotedly on earth, and it will bear you to heaven.

THURSDAY.

Jesus aided by Simon in carrying the Cross.

1st Point. Consider—"And going out, they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon: him they forced to take up his cross" (*Matt.* xxvii.) The unpitying executioners, with brutal fury, drag their unresisting victim towards Calvary. The weight of the cross presses his

lacerated flesh even to the bone. Though exhausted, he proceeds, resolved to bear this painful martyrdom until all strength shall fail. At length he falls under this insupportable burden, and suffers the insolence of the soldiers, who, by their stripes, would force him to arise. Complain not that you are overcharged with labour; do all in your power; if you do not content men, be consoled by the example of Jesus Christ, who suffers unpitied, who labours for the salvation of all, meeting only ingratitude, and who falls under the weight of the cross, whilst the executioners continue their cruelty. How blindly daring the sinner, who charges himself with the burden which neither heaven, nor earth, nor the God of heaven and earth, can support without falling.

My suffering Saviour, my ungenerous heart shrinks from the least labour in thy service, whilst I boldly heap sin on sin, without fear that this burden shall at last cast me even into hell. Ah! my Redeemer, change my foolish boldness into a just fear, and my vain fear into an invincible courage.

2nd Point. Consider—"They laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him." (*Luke*, xxiii.) The Jews, urged rather by cruelty than compassion, relieve Jesus from the weight of the cross. Weakened by excessive torments, he totters at every step; as he is visibly fainting, they yield him this succour only to prolong his torture, fearing lest death should rob them of the cruel gratification of nailing him to the cross. As Jesus refuses not the burden that overwhelms him, neither does he reject the aid that serves but to prolong his sufferings. Is it in this spirit you either mortify your body or afford it relaxation? Do you grant it repose only to prepare it for *greater labour?* Are you not too indulgent to yourself, and too austere towards your

brethren? This is not the fraternal charity of which Jesus has given you an example. His is a spirit of love, which compassionates the weakness of others, and willingly embraces every inconvenience in order to alleviate their wants. Let this heavy cross of your Saviour be the frequent subject of your meditation. You may lighten its weight by discharging your own soul of its defects and evil inclinations, by succouring his afflicted members, the poor, and zealously labouring for the salvation of souls purchased with the blood of the God-Man.

3rd Point. Consider—The cross being an object of malediction with the Jews, which they avoid with horror, a stranger whom they meet on the way to Calvary is constrained to carry the cross of Jesus. Happy constraint, which makes him a Christian, bishop, and martyr, and places his two sons among the principal disciples of the gospel. This action is full of mystery. It teaches, that Jesus will have us bear the cross after him, if we will reign with him. It demonstrates that we love not the cross, without continual violence to the inclinations of nature; that God is so good, he would attract our hearts by a happy necessity; therefore he presents us with the cross; he sends us sickness, disgrace, afflictions, and desolation, that he may force us to seek our salvation, notwithstanding the opposition of our corrupt will. The world says, when its votaries quit its service to consecrate themselves to God, that disappointment alone has determined their choice; but though it were so, O happy disappointment! which insensibly engages them in the divine service, and thereby procures for them that spirit of love which sweetens the yoke of Christ, which before had appeared so heavy.

O my sweet Jesus, regard not what my inclinations demand, but only what is conducive to my salvation.

Give me not that which is pleasing to me, but that which is agreeable to thee. Possess my heart, change my will, and force my rebellious desires.

FRIDAY.

Jesus is led to Calvary.

1st Point. Consider—"And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary." (*John*, xix. 17.) Follow, then, your Saviour, with confidence and love, since he rejects not the company of sinners It is not difficult to find the way by which he goes to Calvary, which is the true way to salvation. He has traced it with his blood, that everywhere he passes he may leave you sensible marks of his love. Alas! there is nothing more sacred nor more precious than this blood, which he sheds so profusely; and nevertheless it is trodden under foot, even by those for whom it is shed. How often have I trodden on it? As often as I have relapsed into my evil habits. O my soul, let us faithfully gather up this precious and salutary balm—all have a share in it. If you profit not of it, you can only accuse your own sloth. Carefully observe the traces of this blood, and consider at the same time those of your life. You journey towards eternity—what are the traces you leave in the way? Are they those of piety, charity, obedience, mortification, humility? Are you not like unto those worldlings who run thoughtlessly to an unhappy end? Do you leave only marks of dissipation, and irregularity in religious observance? If so, you can hope for no other portion than theirs. O fatal portion! unhappy lot! which to avoid a momentary mortification, plunges you into an abyss of wo, from whence you can never come forth!

2nd Point. Consider—"And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented him." (*Luke*, xxiii. 27.) Whilst Jesus goes to be immolated for us on Calvary, marking the way with his blood, many out of the city follow to conduct him to the place of torment, but there are few who compassionate his sorrows. There is found but a woman named Veronica, who presents a white linen to wipe his sacred face, and some others who weep, from that tenderness and compassion natural to their sex. Our Divine Lord suffers not these charitable offices to pass unrequited. The pious Veronica, touched with pity to see him thus faint and disfigured, applies her veil to wipe the sweat and blood from his divine countenance, the impression whereof remains miraculously imprinted on it. O how liberally does the Son of God recompense our least services! What an exact account he holds of them! We cannot doubt that, in leaving this divine impression on the veil of Veronica, he imprinted it more deeply in her heart. It is thus we should desire that the image of Jesus suffering for our sins be impressed in so lively a manner on our souls, that we may never lose the remembrance of it.

O my crucified Redeemer! thou hast not left us the portrait of thy countenance glorified on Thabor, but disfigured on Calvary. Grant me that perfect contrition which will so deeply imprint thy sufferings on my heart, that, imitating thee in this exile, I may hereafter partake in the glories of thy kingdom.

3rd Point. Consider—the salutary lesson which Jesus gives to the other women in recompense of their devotion. Ascending the hill of Calvary, he turns to them, saying: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. He does not forbid them to weep over his passion—it is worthy of an ocean of tears, and all the saints were tenderly affected in meditating on the death of their

Saviour—but he admonishes them to weep for their sins, the cause of his torments, and for the dreadful chastisements with which they are menaced. Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not only for me, but also for yourselves and your children; it is for you that I weep and suffer. This tempest shall pass, and in three days I shall rise again; but unless you do penance, I foresee the evils, temporal and eternal, which will fall upon you. The time shall come wherein you will say: "Blessed are the barren, and the breasts that have not given suck." (*Luke*, xxiii. 29, 30.) And remembering the predictions of my prophets, they shall say, in the excess of their sorrows: "Mountains, fall upon us; hills, cover us." For if the Just One, who is as the green tree, is treated with such rigour, what shall be done with the dry wood? "Weep not for me, but for yourselves." Alas! it is true that we often weep for others when we should weep for ourselves. We weep over the evils of the body, and not for those of the soul. "Weep not for me, but for yourselves." You weep for the sufferings of Jesus—that is good; but you are not sufficiently sensible of your own miseries. Alas! if the Son of God is so treated, what shall the torments of the damned be? If the rage of the Jews in tormenting his sacred body is so great, what will be that of the demons in tormenting both the body and soul of the reprobate?

SATURDAY.

Jesus arrives at Calvary.

1st Point. Consider—"And they come to the place that is called Golgotha, which is the place of Calvary." (*Matt.* xxvii. 33) Behold the place of combat, where the Son of God triumphs over the powers of darkness,

and restores man to liberty. The Increated Wisdom has chosen it from eternity, as the most appropriate for his designs It is the centre of the world, because the cross should be planted therein for the salvation of all men, as the tree of life in the midst of the terrestrial paradise. It is a place the most elevated in Judea, because Jesus is there to operate a mystery, the greatest and most important for the glory of his Eternal Father. It is out of the city, because Jesus is there to be immolated for sinners, as the victim of expiation was cast forth from the camp. Let us go forth with him, as the apostle says; let us disengage ourselves from earthly sentiments and affections, to share in the opprobrium of the cross. It is a place of public infamy, exposed to the view of all, because Jesus would thence teach us the value of humility, and the love he bears it. He hides himself in a stable when he is to be adored by angels and kings; but when he is to die on a gibbet, he chooses a place the most calculated to publish his ignominy. O how contrary is the spirit of Jesus to that of the world! The one seeks honour and esteem, the other abjection and contempt.

2nd POINT. Consider—"And they gave him wine to drink, mingled with gall; and when he had tasted, he would not drink." (*Matt.* xxvii. 34) Whilst, with so much love, Jesus prepares for us a heavenly banquet, sinners, in return, offer him wine mingled with gall. O bounty of God! O ingratitude of man. Jesus would taste this bitter mixture, that no sense might remain free from suffering, to atone for the gluttony of Adam, and leave to his children a remedy for that sensuality unworthy of a Christian, and much more of a religious; to teach us to mortify ourselves, and in our repasts to remember the gall which he tasted, and that of our sins, which was much more bitter to him. But if he tastes the gall, why does he not drink it? It is because he would suffer to the utmost rigour what his

Father had ordained; it is to encourage us to drink the chalice after him—for the bitterness will pass, and he will change it into eternal delights. Have you the courage to drink of this cup? All the saints have drank of it, by afflictions that rendered them worthy of a crown. Take, then, this chalice generously; and if the inclinations of nature would prevent you, say resolutely: Shall I not drink the chalice which my Father has given me.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus is stripped of his clothes for the fourth time. When they first stripped to scourge him, his robe cleaved to his skin from his sweat of blood. The second time, when they took off his own robe to cover him with the purple, it adhered to his wounds, which were then torn anew. Again, when they tore off the purple, and put on his own clothes, to lead him to Calvary, which was not done without a violence attended by a similar effect. But the last time, when they stripped him for the cross, the pain and confusion were extreme; the pain, because his robe was pressed into the flesh by the weight of the cross; the confusion, because it was in presence of an immense multitude, who were gathered in Jerusalem on account of the Pasch, and who ran in crowds to this spectacle. Nevertheless, Jesus would suffer this confusion, to expiate the audacity with which we deliberately offend him; to restore to us sanctifying grace, which is the royal purple of his elect, that we may put on the new man; to console the poor, and to animate us in serving him in his suffering members.

O Comforter of the afflicted, when shall I be stripped of all that is not God, and clothed in thy livery? Have pity on my nakedness; let thy virtues, as a garment, cover me; disengage me from the love of created things, that I may be crucified with thee; for we must be stripped of all, that we may die naked, like thee, upon the cross.

PASSION SUNDAY.

The Crucifixion of Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—"And when they were come to the place called Calvary, they crucified him there." (*Luke.* xxiii. 33.) Jesus being stripped of his garments, in obedience to the executioners, lays himself on the cross, which was extended on the earth, offering his hands and feet, which they place on the holes of the cross. The first takes the right hand, and applying a gross nail, drives it with strokes of the hammer, through the flesh into the wood, opening a fountain of blood. The second, drawing violently the left hand, to the hole prepared in the cross, dislocates all the bones: then piercing it like the former, a new stream of blood issues from this wound. The two others taking each a foot, draw them in like manner, extending the nerves which the pain of the former wounds had contracted; and placing them on a piece of wood attached to the cross as a support, make, at once, two cruel wounds, whence flows this precious and divine balm, which is the remedy of all our evils. Dwell on the extremity of torture which our Lord endures from the disjointing of his bones the breaking of his nerves, the opening of his veins, and the loss of blood which flows from his sacred body, now rivetted with nails to the cross. Admire his silence, and see how this innocent lamb, extended on the wood of the cross, tortured with pain, trembling with cold, raises his eyes to heaven, and his heart to his eternal Father, to whom he offers himself as a victim for the sins of the world. In fine, conceive, in as much as your heart is capable, the excessive sorrow of the Blessed Virgin, who is present at this bloody sacrifice. Alas! she receives as many wounds as she hears strokes of the hammer; and it is a miracle that she expires not each time she hears its

doleful sound. O afflicted Mother, obtain for me the favour of sharing with you in the sorrows of your Son.

2nd Point. Consider—"They crucified him there." Behold an inconceivable increase of pain to the Son of the living God. Being nailed to the cross, they raise it with chords, and with a sudden shock let it fall into the cavity prepared in the rock, fastening it with stakes and stones. This adorable body, suspended by its wounds, and sustained only by three nails, is shaken and dislocated at every moment. The arms bend under the weight, the feet are torn, four rivers of blood flow from these sources of love to purify the earth. In this state Jesus appears to the eyes of the multitude, who only distinguish him from the two thieves by his crown of thorns, his wounded body, and by the title of the cross. This infuriated rabble renew their vociferations, hardening their hearts to a spectacle that should dissolve them in tears. His agonizing mother feels, in every pang, a thrust of the sword of sorrow which was predicted for her; nevertheless, by a miracle of fortitude, she stands unmoved, exposed as a mark to all the shafts of the wrath of God, and the cruelty of man. Contemplate how she imitates her divine Son. He is erect, and so is she: He is elevated in body, she in heart: He is the father of the elect, and she performs the office of mother. O faithful martyr, whose triumph knew no consolation! O sinner! raise your eyes to your Saviour, and reflect how you will testify your feelings of his sufferings. Is it not time that he draw all things to himself, since he is elevated from the earth? Why would he be thus raised, but to detach our hearts from the earth, and fix them on heaven? Behold he gives himself entirely to you. Will you not give yourself to him without reserve; and trusting that in his mercy he will forget your past infidelities, purpose with his grace henceforth to serve him with renewed devotedness.

2nd POINT. Consider—"They divided his garments." (*Mark*, xv. 24.) The soldiers having crucified Jesus Christ, they took his garments, of which they made four parts, one for each soldier—they did not divide the tunic because it was without seam. They said, therefore, let us not cut, but decide by lots whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled, which says, "They divided my garments, and on my vesture they cast lots."

O Jesus! how great is thy love of holy poverty! He had only a cloak and seamless robe, and of these he would be despoiled before his death—he becomes so destitute, that there is nothing of which he can retain the use; to teach you to strip yourself of all conveniences, not only in affection, but in effect, inasmuch as Providence shall furnish you with the opportunity.

The seamless robe of the Son of God is a figure of the indivisible unity of faith, the unity of love amongst the faithful, and the unity of obedience to the Head that governs them. Of these He is so jealous, that he will suffer no division. Let us fly the vices opposed to these, if we are truly the disciples of the cross.

O cross of my Saviour! that I were attached to thy arms with nails of adamant! O precious blood, that flowest from the wounds of my Saviour, as from a tree of myrrh, heal the wounds of my sins.

MONDAY.

The title of the Cross.

1st POINT. Consider—"And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS." (*John*, xix. 19.) Pilate writes this inscription, but it is God dictates it. Whatever might be the intention of the

judge, in the designs of Providence it is to show forth the glory of the crucified, and the enormous crime of the crucifiers. How can they excuse themselves for perpetrating so execrable a deed? What excuse can you bring when you crucify anew the Holy of Holies, your Saviour and your King—"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews?" Consider the qualities of him whom you so often and so freely offend. As Jesus, his glory is to die for man; as the innocent and the holy, to satisfy for sinners; as king to open heaven to the elect. Are you not confounded to see the sovereign homage which is due, and the little you render to him.

O Jesus, King of glory! when the multitude in the desert would make you king, you fly to avoid the honour; and now that this title is given in ignominy, you receive it with meekness. O how you love humility! O how displeasing vanity is to you! O my soul! if you will make Jesus your king, love contempt and sufferings. He has changed ignominy into glory, and suffering into beatitude.

2nd Point. Consider—"This title, therefore, many of the Jews did read." (*John*, xix. 20.) Admirable inscription, which exalts the glory of Jesus above his ignominy. Never was title read by so many, and understood by so few. Some read and understand not; others read and understand, but do not profit by it. There is but a small number of the predestinate who avail themselves of it, because they comprehend its power and virtue. Endeavour to be of this number. Range yourself under the standard of your king, render him your homage, engrave his laws in your soul; he will powerfully protect you in life and in death.

O Incarnate Word, it is just that all people cast themselves at the foot of thy cross, and acknowledge thee as their only King and Redeemer. Thy infinite greatness merits this adoration; and thy obedience, which fastens thee to this wood, equally painful and

ignominious, is a new title which indispensably obliges us to this duty. Thou hast humbled thyself even to the death of the cross, and thy Father in recompense, hath exalted thee, and given thee a name above all names. I should desire to imprint Jesus crucified in the depth of my heart, with the title of the cross, and often to ask myself: "Whose image and inscription is this?" O image of my Redeemer! O title and qualities of my Saviour! O precious coin, with which we pay the tribute of our redemption! Happy soul who at the moment of its departure, bears with it this sacred viaticum! O worthy ransom of our sins! how happily shall we pass from time to eternity, if we possess this inestimable treasure.

3rd Point. Consider—Pilate answered: "What I have written, I have written." (*John*, xix. 22.) Pilate refuses obstinately to change the title of the cross, and Divine Wisdom makes this obstinacy serve to the glory of Jesus and for our instruction. It teaches us in the first place, to observe faithfully the promises we make to God. I will be jealous of my vows, and I will exactly fulfil my resolutions, knowing that God will one day exact a rigorous account thereof. Secondly, it teaches us to persevere until death in the service of God, and pursuit of our perfection. Whither tend all the actions of our lives, if not to the kingdom of heaven, which is eternal? We must then persevere to the last sigh in order to gain it. The kingdoms of the earth end with the present life; but the kingdom of heaven only commences at the moment of our death.

O most sweet Jesus! I beseech you by your most bitter sufferings on the cross, particularly at that moment when your most blessed soul was separated from the body, to have mercy on mine at the moment of its departure from this life.

TUESDAY.

Jesus prays for his enemies.

1st Point. Consider—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." (*Luke*, xxiii. 34.) This prayer could only come from infinite mercy; it is admirable in all its circumstances; it is the first prayer of a dying God; they are the first words he utters after he is elevated on the cross, before he thinks of his mother, his friends, or himself. He first applies a remedy to the most pressing evil; and forgetting those he loves, his first care is given to those who need it most, although they merit it least. It is in favour of his most cruel enemies, and at the moment they are putting him to a most painful death, that he offers this prayer. My Saviour, in what do you employ the first and most grievous moments of your agony on the cross? In prayer. For whom? For your implacable enemies; and it is with an intense fervour you plead their cause. "Father," he says, "forgive them; for they know not what they do." Each word is a dart of fire to the heart of his eternal Father. He seeks not vengeance, but pardon; he asks not justice, but mercy. Father, forgive them; they are thy children, the work of thy hands. Father, look upon thy Son, listen to the voice of his blood demanding mercy for his brethren.

O faithful and generous heart! thou seemest to forget thy sufferings, or all thy torments are only wounds of love: for thy desire is to save those who wound thee. O most amiable Redeemer, thou art truly a God of love, since thy charity has no bounds, and all the waters of the sea, that is to say, of thy bitter passion, cannot extinguish its flames, which extend to all sinners, without a single exception

2nd Point. Consider—what consolation should not a weak and fearful soul feel in these sweet and charita-

ble words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is the beloved Son who prays to his Father for those who crucify him. What will he not entreat for those who desire to serve him? It is the sovereign High-Priest who interposes himself for sinners: what can he fear who has the prayer of Jesus crucified, as a buckler, against the justice of God? We need not apprehend the rigour of our Judge, when Jesus Christ presents to him his wounds, and demands, as the price of his blood, the pardon of those who shed it. If the hope of a Christian rests on the power and mercy of God, both wonderfully meet in the prayer of Jesus. Having only his eyes and tongue free, he weeps and prays for his crucifiers. He weeps in mercy, he prays with an omnipotent voice, that destroys the power of death, and obtains pardon for men. How powerful the prayer that enchains death at the foot of the cross. How great the mercy that effaces in its tears, the crime of those who shed his blood? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is true they are not ignorant that they do evil, but they know not the evil they do, or the chastisement it merits. Thus would the Son of God excuse his enemies, and appease the wrath of his Father. Say can any one lose confidence, having with God so favourable an intercessor? If Jesus Christ excuses, who shall accuse us? If he justifies, who shall condemn us?

3rd Point. Consider—what heart, however obdurate, would not be touched by these words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." If you feel a difficulty in forgetting an injury, I only ask you to think for a moment who he is that prays? what injury has he received? how does he pardon it? You believe that your state will not permit your submitting to an insult; consider who he is that is fastened to the cross. Compare yourself with him. Who are you that would resent an injury? If the Son of God would take ven-

geance of you, where would you be? You would be in hell, and he would not have descended from heaven to die upon a gibbet. You say the offence offered to you is too considerable. Behold that which he receives. And nevertheless, forgetting all he suffers, he only says, "Forgive them." You say that he who has offended you is unworthy of pardon. Listen to the words of a dying God. Are your sentiments and expressions conformable to his? Are you a true disciple of Jesus? Do you glory in imitating him, and engraving in your soul his last words, which have such a power over the hearts of the saints, and that of God himself.

O merciful Redeemer, shall I alone remain insensible to the attractions of thy love? Thy word has converted the most hardened hearts, and shall it make no impression on mine? It is I, O Lord, who have crucified and so often renewed the ignominy of thy passion by my infidelities; grant, then, that I may participate in the divine prayer thou didst offer for thy enemies, and although unworthy the grace I implore, grant to the merit of thy blood that which thou mightest refuse to my malice and ingratitude.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus converts the Thief.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus agonizing on the cross, prepares for us a powerful remedy in his blood; he would prove on the good thief how efficacious its virtue, how salutary its effect. It impresses the dying criminal with a faith so penetrating and lively, that St. Augustin says, there was none like it in Israel. Abraham believed in God, but he spoke to him from heaven Moses believed, but he heard the voice of God from the burning bush. Isaiah believed, but the Lord spoke to

him from the throne of his majesty. The faith of the thief is much more perfect; for he believes in Jesus Christ naked on the cross, when the Jews crucified and the Pharisees blasphemed him; when the apostles wavered in their faith. Secondly, it fills him with a confidence so much the more generous, as it seems to have less support. Thirdly, it enkindles in his heart a most ardent charity towards God and his neighbour. It adds to these theological virtues a profound humility, perfect contempt of the present life, heroic patience, and sincere contrition. O how far are we removed from the sanctity of this penitent sinner!

2nd Point. Consider—the bounty and liberality of Jesus Christ towards the good thief. This humble penitent asks only a remembrance, and he offers him a kingdom. "Verily, I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." (*Luke*, xxiii. 43.) How good a master do we serve? He forgets his own sufferings, to listen to the voice of a sinner. He is silent when they load him with maledictions; and as soon as he hears the cry of affliction, he responds with mercy to its prayer. Are you thus forgetful of yourself when the wants of the suffering members of Christ demand your care? What sacrifices do you make for the salvation of souls? "Dispose yourself as a good and faithful servant of Jesus, to bear courageously the cross of your master." (*Imitat.* b. ii. c. 12.) All must bear the cross. The saints, the penitent, the reprobate, all bear it, but in a different manner. The saints carry it with love; penitents with resignation; the reprobate with impatience and despair. The cross of the saints augments their merit; that of penitents expiates their crimes; that of the reprobate commences their hell in this life. We adore the cross of Jesus, we honour that of the saints and penitents. The cross of the reprobate only brings eternal confusion. Choose which you will, and if you deserve not to carry the cross of the innocent, at least take up generously that of the penitent.

The way of the cross is that alone which leads to Paradise.

3rd Point. Consider—How important for salvation, to avail ourselves of the occasions that Divine Providence permits, and to make good use of grace. The good thief gives us herein a signal example; for he seized on the favourable moment; and had he suffered that to escape, he could never have recovered it. Who would despair, seeing the good thief obtain pardon at the moment of death, after having passed his entire life in crime? Who would not fear, seeing that of two criminals but one is saved. They have both the same Redeemer. The same blood is shed for their ransom. Both have the same example of patience. Both the grace of the Mediator for repentance, and nevertheless, one is lost whilst the other is saved. You have not, therefore, less cause to fear than to hope; but if you will secure an affair of such importance, do now what the good thief did in his last moments, lest what was a miracle of grace for him, should be but a snare for you, which is the ordinary chastisement of infidelity to grace during life.

Adorable Saviour, what wilt thou refuse to those who love, since thou promisest Paradise to those who offend thee? Ah! Lord, being so liberal, whence comes it that so few seek thee? I desire henceforth to avail myself of thy goodness, to enter into thy treasures, and to enrich myself with thy merits. Who can complain of poverty, finding in thee inestimable riches, that only cost the desire of them.

THURSDAY.

Jesus prays on the Cross.

1st Point. Consider—"And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole earth

until the ninth hour." (*Mark*, xv. 33.) It is not surprising that the world should seem returning to its primeval chaos, when death was about to close the eyes of its Creator. The splendour of the sun is but the gift of his creation: should it not therefore be eclipsed when his perfections seem as it were annihilated—his wisdom hidden under the folly of the cross, his strength under weakness, his glory under opprobrium, his innocence under the appearance of guilt, and his immortality under the horrors of death? The moral darkness of human infidelity, is still more general and more profound than that which veils the face of nature. It would seem that with few exceptions, fidelity is enclosed within the heart of Mary. Contemplate the soul of this mother of sorrows under the cross of her divine Son. While in the superior part the light of faith burns with unclouded brightness, the inferior is overspread with unutterable desolation.

O holy Virgin! obtain for me to imitate your naked faith and pure love, under whatever sadness or dereliction may be ordained for me. Beseech your divine Son, that the light of his spirit may never be extinguished in my soul, but that it may enlighten and inflame it more and more, to the end that knowing what he requires, I may faithfully accomplish his will.

2nd POINT. Consider—Jesus imposes silence on his enemies, whilst he offers his life in sacrifice for the expiation of their crimes. For this reason he covers Calvary with an awful obscurity, that the Jews terrified by the prodigy, may leave him in a repose suited to the sanctity and importance of the action. For the same reason he also remains three hours in silence, recollection, and prayer. The silence imposed on his persecutors, demonstrates his divine power; that observed by himself, manifests an infinite bounty, since none but a God could exercise so heroic a patience. Nevertheless we are obliged to imitate him, in as much as our weak-

ness will permit. Every occasion of suffering is a sacrifice God demands: that you may offer it with the respect due to his infinite majesty, recollect yourself, stifle every murmur. Let your heart alone speak to God, and conceal, if possible, from creatures, whatever you may have to endure.

3rd Point. Consider—what passes in the sacred heart of Jesus, during these three hours of silence and prayer. Behold how the blood issuing from his wounded head, and mingling with his tears, pleads your cause before his Eternal Father. Reflect also how the Blessed Virgin standing by the cross, is penetrated with the sword of sorrow. She passes these three hours of darkness and silence in continual prayer, accompanied by tears of intense anguish, sometimes offering to God the bleeding sacrifice of her beloved Son, again pouring forth her heart in tender sentiments of sorrow and compassion for his sufferings; in fine, resigning herself to the will of the Eternal Father, and drinking the bitter chalice presented to her, even to the dregs. Beseech your angel guardian to present your petitions to the Son and to the Mother; say to him:

My faithful Protector, obtain for me one of those tears which my expiring Saviour shed upon the cross, to mitigate the mortal agony and terrifying apprehensions that my poor heart may have to undergo at the hour of dissolution. Pray, also, that the holy Virgin would favour me in that dangerous passage, with one of those pitying looks she cast upon her divine Son, while extended on the cross. O tears infinitely precious! O look in which sovereign love and sorrow are united.

FRIDAY.

The Blessed Virgin at the foot of the Cross.

1st Point. Consider—"To what shall I compare thee? or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? for great as the sea is thy sorrow: who shall heal thee?" (*Lam.* ii. 13.) To follow Jesus to Calvary is the most certain proof of love. Hence the Virgin Mother, whose burning heart of all others glowed the most intensely with its flame, approaches nearest to her crucified Son. Behold this heart-wrung, desolate Mother, fastened also in spirit to that cross by the intensity of her love, the poignancy of her anguish, and the compassion with which she witnesses all his dolors. This is the two-edged sword transpiercing her soul, as the Prophet Simeon had predicted; for such is the intimate union and sympathy between the hearts of Jesus and Mary, that the sorrows of the one are instantly communicated to the other. Mary is not only a martyr, but queen of martyrs, because she has sacrificed her life in that of her divine Son, the head and chief of martyrs; because she has been his most devoted companion, suffering in desire all that he suffered in effect, and suffering more in effect than all the saints have suffered from the malice and cruelty of tyrants.

O Mother of love and sorrows! obtain for me to love and suffer after thy example. "Refuge of sinners, grant that we may tread thy steps; and let it be our sorrow, not to grieve like thee."

2nd Point. Consider—it is in great sufferings that virtues the most heroic are practised. The Blessed Virgin, at the foot of the cross, exercised a most ardent charity, co-operating with the eternal Father in the

passion and death of her beloved Son, for the divine honour and the salvation of man. In the mystery of the incarnation she discovers an admirable faith, and in that of the passion, an entire conformity. This mother of sorrow stands transfixed at the foot of the cross with invincible patience; unmoved amidst the horrible tempest, as a rock beaten by the waves, and supporting all the ignominies of Calvary with fortitude the most inflexible. Behold the tender and maternal love with which she silently gazes on her divine Son, not opening her lips either to complain of the cruelty inflicted on him, or to give expression to her own griefs. Look upon yourself in this mirror of patience, and acknowledge your weakness and defects. O what a little thing makes you lose courage! A word, a look, suffices to overcome your resolutions.

O faithful disciple of thy crucified Son, teach me to be silent in affliction, and not consider the evil I suffer, but the will of God, which is accomplished in my sufferings.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus, in the midst of his torments, omits nothing of the office of Saviour and Mediator between God and man. From his cross he bequeaths *us*, in the person of St. John, to his beloved Mother, saying—"Woman, behold thy Son;" and to St. John, "Behold thy Mother." (*John*, xix. 26, 27.) These words are not simple signs of his will, but operate what they signify; impressing on the heart of the Blessed Virgin a maternal love, and on that of the disciple a filial respect and confidence. Rejoice that Jesus has also given you as a child to this all-powerful Queen of Heaven. When from the cross he said to her heart: "Behold thy Son," he also said to yours: "Behold thy Mother." I give her as mediatrix, and refuge in all your necessities. Observe, St. John was chosen the first adopted Son of Mary, in consideration of his admirable purity, and love for his divine Master

in following him to Calvary. If you desire to be the child of Mary, imitate this beloved disciple, by increasing daily, under her protection, in the love of purity and mortification. These virtues will give you access to the Son and the Mother.

O afflicted Mother, the wounds inflicted on the body of thy adorable Son, the pangs that rend his heart, the sobs of his death-struggle, and that dying look of love, complete thy martyrdom. Suffer not then (as thou didst endure them for my sake) a child that has cost thee so much, to perish—a child whose most earnest prayer now is, to have that same sword of sorrow plunged into his heart, in order that he may become a victim of contrition for the pains, the anguish he has caused thy beloved Son.

SATURDAY.

Jesus complains of thirst.

1st Point. Consider—"I thirst." (*John*, xix. 28.) The extreme thirst that the Son of God endures on the cross is one of his greatest torments A burning heat consumes his very bowels, from the empowering fatigue and torments endured since the preceding evening, having found neither repose nor refreshment: moreover the loss of blood had dried up his body, particularly the tongue, mouth, and throat. "My tongue," he says by the royal prophet, "hath cleaved to my jaws." "My heart is withered as grass which is stricken by the burning sun." Consider the charity of the Son of God, who suffers this torment to atone for your sensual gratifications; to console the poor in their necessities; in fine, to deliver you from that eternal thirst which you should suffer in hell, had he not saved you from it. Reflect often during your repasts: first, that Jesus

crucified is consumed with a burning thirst.—Is it just that the master suffer and the slave indulge? Second, that many of his members are in indigence worse than sickness or death. Do you not fear that reproach: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink? Third, that the rich man burns in flames, and egs a drop of water, that will never be granted.

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst." (*John*, xix. 28.) Jesus complains of thirst, not to be relieved, but to drink vinegar, and so accomplish the prediction of the prophet. He only declares his thirst, without asking to drink, to teach us to support our pains, and discover our necessities with resignation and without inquietude. He only declares it in extremity, because he desires on one side to exercise patience, and on the other to leave us a proof of what he suffers for us. In fine, he declares it in *one word*, which comprehends three great secrets touching the spiritual thirst of his soul. The first regards his ardent desire to accomplish the will of his Father, which made him say during his life: "My meat is to do the will of my Father." (*John*, iv. 34.) The second, his desire of suffering for us. At the commencement of his passion he prays that the chalice may pass from him, and at the close he says that he yet thirsts for it. This teaches you that it is not wrong to fear chastisement, and pray that it may be averted: but if God ordains otherwise, you should embrace it generously, and desire it still more. "I thirst." The third is, his desire of the salvation and sanctification of our souls, by the application of his merits and his blood.

3rd Point. Consider—this thirst of the Son of God will never be allayed: it proceeds from the ardour of his love, and the extent of his charity, which is boundless. His heart thirsts after yours: will you be so

ungrateful as to refuse it? And if he thirsts after you, will you not thirst after him? You are astonished at the cruelty of the Jews, who seeing the Son of God expiring in torments, refuse him a drop of water, whilst he sheds his blood for them. Alas! what do you do to alleviate his sufferings in the persons of the poor, who are his members? Your impatience, your harshness of manner, your want of zeal in imparting instruction and consolation in their spiritual necessities, are more bitter to him than the vinegar and gall. You afflict him still more in the spiritual thirst of his soul. Instead of the virtues he demands, you only offer him imperfections. Instead of the tears of a contrite heart, you give him but the terrestrial affections of a carnal one. The vinegar of the Jews was a figure of their souls, which had degenerated from the piety of the Patriarchs. It is the same in your regard, who have degenerated from the virtue of the saints who have preceded you. Ungrateful soul, think what you do when you offend your God: you offer gall and vinegar in return for the blood he has shed, and the torments he has suffered for you.

O my adorable Saviour, my soul, wounded with thy love, sighs after thee, as the thirsty stag after the fountains of living water.

PALM SUNDAY.

"*Tell ye the daughters of Sion: behold thy King cometh to thee meek.*"

1st Point. Consider—that Jesus Christ derives his meekness, which is a royal virtue, from the bosom of his Father, and that he exercises it in ours, when he enters in the holy communion to make us sensible of

its effects. He draws it from the bosom of his heavenly Father by an eternal generation. St. Bernard says, well may the cry of the humble ascend to him who dwells in the source of mercy, to whom clemency is hereditary, goodness consubstantial, and who holds all that he is from the Father, to the end that the lowly, whom weakness renders timid, may not fear the Majesty that surrounds him, which only breathes the sweetness of mercy. But in order to enter our hearts in the holy communion, he takes another birth in the sacramental species, that he may reign by clemency in our souls. For although he enters as in triumph, nevertheless he hides every sensible mark of his greatness, and shows forth only his humility, poverty, patience, and bounty, to make us love him, and learn that he is meek and humble of heart. If after this we remain insensible to his goodness, do we not deserve the reproach: What could I have done for you that I have not done?

O most meek Lamb! what hast thou not done for me? and what have I hitherto done for thee? Come, O Lord, take possession of my heart, that it may love and serve thee for ever.

2nd Point. Consider—the meekness of the Son of God in the adorable sacrament expressed in those words: "Behold thy King cometh to thee meek." The Prophet Isaiah gives him the qualities of Saviour. He assumed these qualities at his entrance into the world; also at his entrance into Jerusalem, in the day of his triumph; and again at his entrance into our hearts in the holy communion. First, he comes to you as Saviour, to sanctify, and give you a pledge of the felicity he prepares for you, in recompense of your worthily receiving him. His recompense is to render you happy, his work to render you holy. Secondly, he comes as the just one, not to condemn, but to satisfy for you, and to offer himself to the divine justice to expiate your sins. Thirdly, he comes in the spirit of humility and poverty,

to encourage the poor and the lowly, supporting with meekness our irreverence and neglect.

O Lord! why forget thyself so far as to come to so vile a creature? There is nothing in me to attract thy mercy, but my extreme misery. O my soul, rejoice that the Son of God comes to seek criminals, to pardon them; to seek the blind, in order to enlighten them; the sick, to heal them; the captives, to deliver them; and strayed souls, to save them. O King of hearts! liberate mine, break the bonds that attach it to the earth, ornament it with thy virtues, to make it the seat of thy empire.

3rd Point. Consider—what you ought to do in order to receive your king, who would enter in triumph into your heart, which is his kingdom, not by force, but by meekness and love. "Fear not, daughter of Sion;" dismiss the excessive fear that prevents your drawing fruit from this sacrament; change it into a profound respect, mingled with a loving confidence in the goodness of your Master. He comes as the Holy of Holies; in this quality he demands respect. He comes as Saviour, and as such demands a firm hope in his mercy. Figure to yourself that the day of communion is a day of harvest, of victory and triumph, a happy day, which will deliver you from the yoke of your evil habits, and enrich you with the spoils of your enemies. In fine, consider what the multitude do to honour the triumphant entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem, that you may imitate them. Place yourself amongst those who follow him, cast off your evil habits, tread under foot all desire of honour and esteem, imitate the meekness, humility, and patience of your divine Master; say with St. Bernard:

"My Lord Jesus, it is thy meekness that draws me after, and gives me confidence in approaching thee, remembering thou didst not reject the confession of the good thief, nor the tears of Magdalen, nor the humble

prayer of the Canaanean, nor even those who crucified thee. Glory to the Son of David, the meekest of all Kings."

MONDAY.

"*Jesus therefore, when he had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated.*" (*John*, xix. 30.)

1st Point. Consider—Jesus being ready to give up his spirit, reflects on all the labours, humiliations, opprobriums, and torments, which Divine Justice had ordained him to suffer in expiation of our crimes; and commencing from the moment of his entrance into the world until this in which he is going forth from it, he finds that the work of Redemption is consummated. You cannot say the same, either for the past or the future. As for the past, how often have you shrunk from the cross, or received it with murmuring when you could not escape it? As for the future, you have not yet terminated your sufferings. Animate yourself to suffer with more patience and constancy. Listen not to the flesh, the world, or the devil, who would persuade you to descend from the cross. You must remain to the end and expire upon it. Perseverance is the crown of virtue. Without it, he that combats cannot gain the victory, nor the conqueror the glory of a triumph. Perseverance is the principle of our strength, the perfection of virtue, the treasure that will procure an eternal recompense, the sister of patience, the rampart of sanctity, as St. Bernard says. Persevere generously on the cross until death, that you may be able to say: I have fought well, I have suffered, I have consummated my course; there remains for me the crown of glory.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus being ready to give up his spirit, reflects on the work his Father had given

him. He considers all the actions of his life, with all the charges that had been committed to him. He looks upon that of Mediator, Redeemer, doctor, legislator, sovereign pontiff, guide to eternity, and he finds that all is consummated. He has preached the gospel, and traced a model of every virtue. All is consummated. O who can enter into the mystery of the cross! There is to be found a summary of all perfection. What lessons, hitherto unknown, of pardoning injuries, sacrificing self-interest to the glory of God, persevering unto death in the respect and submission due to him; of crucifying the flesh, despising the present life, returning good for evil; of persecuting, punishing, and destroying sin wherever it is found, even at the peril of life; of taking heaven by violence, ascending to it by the cross, omitting no good that can be performed, and never passing a moment of life that is not employed in gaining eternity! Admire the perfect obedience of the Son of God, and penetrate the sense of these words: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. Examine is your life conformable to the model traced for you; have you accomplished the work he has given you to do; if not, have you repaired it by true penitence, or are you resolved to do so without delay, to the end that you may be able to say at the moment of death: All is consummated?

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus being ready to give up his spirit, reflects on all the benefits he desired to confer on mankind in the course of his life, and he finds he has spared nothing in their favour. "It is consummated." His blood, his strength, his merits, are exhausted; he has not reserved a single moment of life which he has not given us. "He learned obedience by the things which he suffered," as St. Paul says; "and being sacrificed as a holocaust, he became the cause of eternal salvation to all that obey him." O liberality worthy of God! how ungrateful are you, if you are not ready

to be consumed in the service of him who has immolated himself for your salvation! How ungrateful, if you suffer to perish by your negligence, what he has acquired with so much pain! He has placed all spiritual goods in the cross. The hope of glory and beatitude is in the cross. But we must ascend and persevere on it with Jesus Christ, in order to gain them. You often conceive good desires, but you do not execute them. You sometimes begin well, but, if you continue for a time, you do not persevere to the end.

O my divine Saviour! who hast given me all with so much bounty, grant me this new favour, that I may not ungratefully abuse thy liberality; but that I may return to their source all that I have received from thee; that I may seek thy grace with care, and employ it with fidelity; in fine, that my life may be a continual thanksgiving, as thine hath been a continual succession of benefits.

TUESDAY.

"Jesus cries with a loud voice: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

1st Point. Consider—"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (*John*, xix. 30.) Of what abandonment does Jesus complain in his agony? The first regards the interior desolation in which he was left by his eternal Father from the commencement of his passion, without relief or consolation. The second regards his exterior sufferings, which continue without repose or relaxation unto his last sigh. His heavenly Father abandons him to expire in this pitiable state; and although he continues his prayer for three hours, yet the eternal Father remains inflexible to the cry of

his beloved Son—a dereliction so sensible, that it casts him into an agony like unto that in the garden, which draws from him this loving complaint: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Admire how so loving a Father exercises this rigorous justice on his divine Son, to avenge the sin which he has not committed, but of which you are guilty. Be not troubled if it sometimes seem as if God had forgotten you in your interior or exterior pains. Fear not to drink this chalice, after the example of the saints, and of the Son of God, who was the most forsaken of all, although the most beloved. Fear not that God will ever abandon you, if you do not abandon him.

2nd Point. Consider—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Since Jesus has offered himself to all the sufferings of the cross, and endures them with an ardent love, an invincible patience, a confidence and entire submission to the will of God, why does he complain? First, to discover to us the excess of his sorrows; for although he is God, he suffers as man, and neither the hypostatic union nor the beatific vision diminishes the pain that agonizes him. Secondly, he complains, to give us an example, that it is only to the paternal goodness of God we are to complain in our difficulties. Thirdly, it is to make us understand that the cause of his sufferings is not in himself, but in us. O how excessive is the malice of my sins, since to atone for them Jesus suffers a desolation so extreme!

I had abandoned thee, O my God, and merited to be reciprocally abandoned by thee. But, O infinite mercy! instead of forsaking a wretched criminal, thou abandonest thy divine Son. How great must be the evil that demands such a remedy. O Jesus! though I should be abandoned by heaven and earth for a time, dare I complain, when I behold thy dereliction.

3rd Point. Consider—"This man calls Elias!" (*Matt.* xxvii. 47.) Heaven hears the complaint of Jesus with

respect, the Blessed Virgin with sorrow, the soldiers with contempt, because they know him not. They believe that he invokes Elias, and he is the God of Elias. They imagine his complaint is a mark of weakness, and it is an admirable effect of love. O how few there are who understand the language of God! How few who respect his words, or enter into the depth of his sorrows! Ah! if men considered who it is that complains thus upon the cross; if they knew what he suffers for them, there is no heart so insensible as not to be touched; though it were of iron, the fire of compunction would penetrate it; though it were stone, compassion would break it, or love would melt it into tears.

O sweet Jesus! I behold thee abandoned, bereft of strength and support. My God, my God, thou dost exclaim, why hast thou forsaken me? Child of sorrow, it would seem thou hast no Father, or that thou darest not look upon him as such. Ah! who will give to my eyes tears, and to my heart tenderness, to compassionate thy sufferings? Eternal Father, thou hast abandoned thy Son to redeem thy slaves; receive the slaves for love of him: it is the only consolation he asks before he dies. Forsake them not in thy justice, since they abandon themselves to thy mercy, which is their only resource in their extreme misery.

WEDNESDAY.

Jesus commends his spirit into the hands of his Eternal Father.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (*Luke*, xxiii. 46.) He cries with a loud voice, to show forth his power, and verify what he had said, that he laid down his life because it was his will.

As in elevating his voice he exercised a supernatural power, he could with equal facility prolong his life, had such been his sovereign pleasure. Jesus cried with a loud voice, to testify with what violence his soul is separated from the body. Approach, christian soul, and contemplate this spectacle; listen to the cry of your Redeemer, who expires amidst the torments inflicted for your sins. His cry is strong and violent, because your obstinacy is extreme. In fine, Jesus cried with a loud voice, to terrify his enemies, and publish his victory over the powers of hell. His death puts a period to the tyranny of Satan, who, chained at the foot of the cross, becomes the trophy of his vanquisher. Prepare for your last combat, by devotion to the angels who were present at the death of Christ, not to assist him, but to honour his victory. He needed not their succour, but you will require it at that most important moment; and endeavour to meet it by your devotion during life.

2nd Point. Consider—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Jesus, with his expiring voice, calls upon God by the tender name of Father, to testify his confidence, and teach us the practice of this virtue in the most terrible of all combats. He recommends not his body, which he abandons to suffering and death, but his soul—thus terminating as he had commenced his life, by prayer. He would, by this example, engrave in our inmost spirit this truth—that the soul alone is of paramount importance: if saved, all is saved; if lost, all is lost for eternity. Jesus, in commending his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, has at the same time recommended ours, which are truly his own, since he purchased them at the price of his blood. Unite, then, your voice with that of your dying Saviour, and say with him, both in life and death: My God and my Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

Save it, O Lord, from the power of my enemies. Save it from the jaws of the lion; for it is my only one, and thou knowest that thy dear Son committed it to thee with his expiring breath.

3rd Point. Consider—"And bowing his head, he gave up the ghost." (*John*, xix. 30.) Jesus bows his head in testimony of the obedience he renders to his eternal Father, by dying to accomplish his command. It is a sign of true obedience to bow the head, and humbly submit to the will of those whom God has placed over you. He bows his head towards the earth, where his body is soon to be entombed, and towards Limbo, where his soul is about to descend; teaching you frequently to visit in spirit the abode which your soul and body shall inhabit after death. This thought will teach you to bow your head, in resignation to the divine will. It will humble you like the publican, who dared not raise his eyes towards heaven. It will cause you to place yourself beneath the feet of all, remembering the dust from which you were created, and to which you shall again return. Meditate, for your consolation, how the Son of God bows his head to impart the kiss of peace, and reconcile you with heaven, before appearing at the tribunal of his divine justice.

MAUNDAY THURSDAY.

Jesus institutes the Blessed Sacrament.

1st Point. Consider—"And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke, and gave to his disciples." (*Matt.* xxvi. 26.) Jesus, by a miracle of unexampled love, bequeaths us his sacred body and blood in the eucharistic sacrament, in the same night in which he is to be delivered up to death for our sins. Whilst his enemies are plotting against

his life, he invents a means of remaining with us unto the consummation of ages. He would not leave us orphans; he therefore conceals himself under the species of bread, that becoming food for us, he may live in our hearts even after his death. He chooses for this purpose the time of night, as if to hide our crimes from his justice, lest it should bind the hand of his mercy. Admire the charity of this tender Father, and return not ingratitude for such stupendous benefits. Beseech him to cast on you that eye of mercy which, whilst it discovers your miseries, will not be repelled by your offences.

My most merciful Redeemer, thou hast instituted this sacrament of love under the obscurity of night: "my soul hath desired thee in the night" of her darkness and misery. Enter therein, Lord, that thou mayest live in me, and make me die to all that is contrary to thy love.

2nd Point. Consider—"Take and eat: this is my body." (*Ibid.*) Jesus would himself be our inheritance, our treasure, our patrimony; and for this purpose he leaves us his body and blood by his last testament. O testament of love! O inexhaustible treasure! O divine patrimony! What treasure can the heart of man possess comparable to that of the body of Jesus Christ, when he receives it in the spirit of humility and devotion? Receive it, therefore, with reverence; guard it with the vigilance of love; and hide it deeply in your soul, that no one may rob you of this treasure. "Place" it "as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm, for love is strong as death."

O God of love! take, I beseech thee, my heart into thy own care; be thou its guardian, that nothing contrary to thy will may enter therein.

3rd Point. Consider—"Do this in commemoration of me." (*Luke*, xxii. 19.) Such is the last will of our Father, declared to us by his testament. He asks but

one thing—that having died for us, we should fondly cherish the memory of this ineffable benefit, particularly in approaching his altar. For this end he comes into our hearts in the holy communion, that he may engrave thereon the image of his wounds and sufferings. He employed the hand of a seraph to imprint them on the body of St. Francis, but he would unite himself to our souls as a seal, of which the impression might never be effaced. Receive him, therefore, with a lively feeling of his dolors. Let Jesus crucified be so deeply engraven in your soul, that you may become like unto him, a man of sufferings and of the cross. Fear not to bear his wounds on your heart, for love will render the pain more desirable than all the pleasures of the world.

O Lord, my heart cannot be worthily disposed to receive thee, but by meditating on thy sacred passion; and can I meditate on it without resolving to die to myself? As thou hast, by thy last testament, made me thy heir, I desire also to become thy inheritance. I therefore bequeath myself to thee absolutely and without reserve—my heart to thy love, my will to thy law, my understanding to the meditation of thy mysteries, my memory to the perpetual remembrance of thy death, my soul and body as a holocaust, to be sacrificed to thy glory, and consumed in thy service.

GOOD FRIDAY.

1st Point. Consider—"And bowing his head, he gave up the ghost." (*John*, xix. 30.) Jesus having endured all that the cruelty of his enemies could invent, submits to death, the last of temporal evils. Already a mortal paleness overspreads his countenance, his body grows cold, his eyes close, his lips fade; yet one sigh, and his soul goes forth and descends into Limbo. He

languishes, he dies, he is dead. Ah! Mother of sorrows, "thou hast heard the cry that declares thee desolate." The sword has now penetrated thy inmost soul He is dead! He has died to repair the honour of the Divinity by the sacrifice and annihilation of a God! He has died to redeem us, at the price of his own life, from the eternal death to which we were condemned! He has died that we may be forced to acknowledge him as our Sovereign Lord, since he has given himself for our ransom! Deeply ponder this truth. You belong not to yourself, but to him who has died to restore your life. Why then do you follow your own inclinations, in contempt of him to whom you so justly belong, and against his legitimate right to dispose of you, who are the work of those hands, now pierced with nails and fastened to the cross? You owe nothing to flesh and blood, to the world, or to Satan. Why then do you again become their slave, at the risk of your eternal salvation? Ungrateful soul! You owe them nothing, yet you give them all! You owe all to Jesus, and you give him nothing!

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus crying with a loud voice, gave up the ghost." (*Matt.* xxvii. 50.) How miserable soever life may be, we cling to it with a natural love, because there is in it something divine. Jesus the Sovereign Lord of life, would terminate his under the most violent and ignominious torments, to confound our delicacy and pusillanimity. We dare not think of the approach of death without horror. The slightest malady casts us into impatience and murmuring. We complain of heat and cold, the hardness of our bed, the negligence of attendants, of disgust, disquietude, or pain. Had we meditated and felt the agonies and pains of Jesus Christ, we would be ashamed to complain of our sufferings. Your bed is softer than the wood of the cross; your food is not so bitter as his gall and vinegar, nor your pains so sharp as the thorns that

pierce his sacred head. You are not despised, persecuted, and abandoned as he was. Yet he is innocent, and you criminal; he is God, and you but a mean creature!

Teach me, O Lord, to die, as thou didst, in prayer, in tears, and in sorrow for my sins.

3rd Point. Consider—"He gave up the ghost." (*Mark*, xv. 37.) Jesus Christ having died for love of man, justly desires to survive in our hearts by love. He should live in our thoughts by a perpetual remembrance. The Holy Ghost (did we co-operate) would thus draw in our understandings a lively portrait of this crucified God, that we may unceasingly contemplate him. He should live in our affections, since the love which delivered him unto death for each in particular, merits at least a correspondence on our part. His goodness, which is the first attraction of love, has never appeared more touching than on this occasion; and the soul must be altogether insensible that makes no return for such incomparable bounty. In fine, he should live in all our actions, so that we perform not any but with a view to the glory of him who has done so much for us. Every respiration should be devoted to our adorable Mediator, who has laboured for our salvation to his latest sigh. Let his passion be to you a mystery of life and death. Destroy sin and self-love, which is the root of all vice, and make the virtue and love of Jesus crucified live within you.

Thy death, most amiable Redeemer, is my consolation, my strength, and my hope. Though my sins terrify me, when I remember thou hast died for me, I remit my soul with confidence into those pierced hands, red with the blood whose slightest drop would efface all the crimes of the world. As thou hast died for me, O amiable Jesus, grant that I may die to sin, to the world, and to myself, in order to live eternally to thee.

HOLY SATURDAY.

Jesus laid in the tomb.

1st Point. Consider—"They took, therefore, the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices." (*John*, xix. 40.) Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, having prepared a ladder to reach the sacred body of Jesus, take off the crown of thorns and draw out the nails; then supporting him who bears up the world, they descend from the cross. Happy Joseph and Nicodemus, who receive the ransom of the world in your arms! Happier priests, who, by a prerogative that exalts you above angels, daily receive him from heaven. Contemplate the obedience of the Son of God, who leaves himself entirely to the disposal of those who render him this last office; but admire still more the promptness with which he descends upon the altar, whenever the sacramental words are uttered. When will you be thus perfectly submissive, and no more resist the will of God and those who govern you, than the sacred body of your master? This most holy body, this fruit of obedience, being now detached from the cross, falls into the bosom of the Virgin Mother. O heavenly fruit, hitherto so delicious, how bitter art thou become! Behold this tender mourner embracing the dead body of him who was her consolation and her life. She wipes his livid face, closes his eyes, and bathes his wounds with her tears. St. John casts himself on that bosom where he had reposed the evening before. Magdalen, prostrate at his feet, washes them again with her tears. If this spectacle touches not your heart, at least be humbled and confounded at your insensibility.

2nd Point. Consider—"They took, therefore, the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury." (*John*, xix. 40.) The tomb of the dead is the best school for

the living. Consider attentively that of the Son of God, which should be your model in receiving the holy communion. The tomb of the Son of God is in a garden; your soul should be as a garden, in which the flowers of every virtue flourish. The tomb is cut in a rock, and the body of Jesus is laid therein only after the strokes of the hammer. Approach not these divine mysteries, until prepared by mortification: you cannot be united to the body of Jesus Christ, but by the thorns and the nails of the cross. The tomb is new. Bring therefore to the holy table a new heart, and take care that Jesus alone enter therein. The tomb is a place of gloom and sadness, a dwelling unworthy the majesty of the Son of God, but it is rendered glorious by his presence. As life, he banishes death; as light, he chases away darkness; as the Holy of Holies, he purifies it from corruption. Imitate him in these three qualities. Receive not the bread of heaven, until you have banished sin from your soul, calmed the passions that darken it, and purified its sensual affections.

3rd Point. Consider—the burial of the Son of God gives to the devout women an occasion of exercising three considerable virtues: whence you may learn the duties you should render to Jesus Christ in the holy sacrament, where your soul should seek him, and where your body is to serve him as a sepulchre. First, consider and meditate with attention all that faith teaches regarding this mystery. Second, prepare for the holy communion with all possible diligence. Third, spare no exertion to receive worthily this sacred deposit; approach it with that purity of conscience and lively devotion necessary for the reception of such a guest. In fine, when you have received him, carefully seal your heart, place a guard on your senses, that your Lord may remain with you, and engrave on your inmost soul his image, as he did on the winding sheet in which his sacred body was wrapped. Reflect seriously before God,

how often you fail in these holy practices; how great your irreverence; how many graces and favours you lose for want of care in disposing yourself to receive, and devotion in entertaining your Lord after communion.

My God and my all, since thou art my only and sovereign good, why should any created object divide my heart with thee? What can it desire out of thee? What can it lose, if it possess thee? What can it gain, if it lose thee?

EASTER SUNDAY.

1st Point. Consider these words—"Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead." (2 *Tim.* ii. 8.) Contemplate the glory of the soul of Jesus Christ returning victorious from Limbo, to reunite itself to his sacred body. He shows it to the saints, who accompany him in triumph, that they may behold the excess of his love for man. With what sentiments of love, joy, gratitude, admiration, and reverence, are these ancient Patriarchs and Prophets transported, in seeing the adorable body of their Liberator lying in the tomb, deprived of life, and covered with those wounds which proclaim how much he suffered for their salvation! With reason does St. Bonaventure exclaim: "Thou hast so much love for me, my God, it would seem that thou hast none for thyself. Hadst thou a hatred for thy sacred humanity, couldst thou expose it to greater outrages and more cruel torments than those thou hast endured to save me? Why do I not imitate thy incomparable charity? When shall I love thee so as to despise myself, hate my body, and bear upon my heart those loving words thou didst heretofore imprint on the heart of blessed Mectilde: 'I would rather die, O good

Jesus than be separated from thee by the least offence.'"

2nd POINT. Consider—the glory of the sacred body of Jesus Christ when re-united to his blessed soul. He not only frees it from the law of death and the infirmities of a passible body, but endows it with all the privileges of beatitude, and changes its wounds into so many sources of light. Therefore, St. Chrysostom says—that the glory of the resurrection has extinguished all the opprobrium of the passion. How liberal is God in recompensing the labours of those who suffer in his service! Fear not the mortification of the body; if you suffer with Jesus Christ, you shall reign with him. "What affliction is not solaced by the hope of a resurrection? What sadness or grief can dwell in the heart of him who believes that nothing perishes by death? That, on the contrary, as the number of our days is shortened, so our loss is diminished; and that our decease is not the end of life, but rather of mortality:" thus St. Augustin. St. Bernard says—"Henceforth, all my efforts shall be to follow the humble Jesus: I will embrace him with the arms of a reciprocal charity, who has loved me, and delivered himself for me; but I must eat of the paschal lamb, because, unless I eat of his flesh and drink of his blood—that is, participate in his passion and death, I shall not possess life eternal."

3rd POINT. Consider—the glory of his divinity, which had been as it were hidden in his passion, begins to shine forth in his miraculous issuing from the tomb. He comes forth as sovereign Lord of life and death. He comes forth as the Omnipotent, endowing his sacred body with the subtilty of a spirit, by which it penetrates the stone of the sepulchre. He comes forth to take possession of his eternal kingdom, and seated on the throne of his Father, to receive from heaven and earth the homage due to God alone. He comes as Joseph from his prison, to command in Egypt, and impart to

his brethren who had sold him, his happiness and glory. He comes forth as Moses from the Nile, to be the God of Pharao. He comes forth as Daniel from the lion's den, and as Sampson from the city of Gaza, bearing away the gates in triumph to the mountain. He comes forth victorious over hell and sin; he changes his weakness into power and strength, and the ignominy of his passion into honour and glory. Adore the divinity of Jesus, manifested by so stupendous a miracle, and learn that you must rise from the tomb of sin and evil habits, if you would reign with him. Let it be said of you: He is no longer in forgetfulness of God, without control of the senses, guard of the heart, or recollection of spirit. He is no longer impetuous, irritable, uncharitable, or under the dominion of vicious inclinations, calculated to retard his spiritual advancement.

O glorious Conqueror of death! arise from the dust of the tomb; be exalted above the heavens, and display to the whole earth thy glory. Amen, Amen, Alleluiah!

MONDAY.

On Jesus Christ in his Resurrection, the model of the glorified bodies of the just.

1st Point. Consider—the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the model of the general resurrection of the just, as his death is the meritorious cause thereof. "The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (*John*, v. 28, 29) The reprobate shall come forth from the tomb hideous and frightful; the blessed, on the contrary, shall arise more glorious than the sun. St. Vincent Ferrier says, that

if God were to place in the heavens one glorified body, this alone would shed a more resplendent lustre than the mid-day sun. What shall be the brightness of that day on which all the just shall arise in glory. Then shall they truly say—"This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad, and rejoice thereon. Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again: awake, and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust." (*Isaiah*, xxvi. 19.) "It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. Behold I tell you a mystery. We shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed." (*Cor.* xv.) This happiness is only for the elect. The impious shall not rise in glory, they shall have no place in the assembly of the just. Both shall come forth from their sepulchres, but their lot shall be different. With which do you desire to rank? O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?

2nd Point. Consider—the certainty and infallibility of the resurrection of the dead. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality." (*Cor* xv. 52, 53.) Meditate these words: the dead must arise; because our bodies, according to St. Paul, are the members of Jesus Christ, who is our head: the head should not be separated from the body. It is reasonable that it enter first into glory; but the members should follow. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you." (*Peter*, i. 3, 4.) This hope sustains us, while "bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also o.

Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh ..... knowing that he who raised up Jesus will raise up us also with Jesus." (2 *Cor.* iv. 10, 14.) "And if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of his spirit that dwelleth in you." (*Rom.* viii. 11.) Our mortal bodies are united by the holy communion, to the immortal body of Jesus Christ. If, then, whilst yet mortal and passible, his touch raised up the dead, shall he not, says St. Cyril, resuscitate us, who eat his flesh and drink his blood? He himself assures us: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." (*John*, vi. 62.)

3rd Point. Consider—the consolation which is imparted by a firm hope in the resurrection. Then tears shall be changed into joy, pains into delights, poverty into abundance, confusion into glory, death into eternal life. Such was the consolation of Job amidst his sufferings. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God." (*Job*, xix. 25, 26, 27.) Yes, I shall see him with my eyes, and this hope "which is laid up in my bosom," sustains me in all my pains. Such also was the hope of the Machabees, whom king Antiochus would force by torments to renounce the faith of their fathers. One of these martyrs thus addresses the tyrant with his expiring breath—"You deprive us, O wicked king, of a passing life; but the king of heaven and earth will raise us to an eternal one, if we die for the observance of his laws." Another presenting his tongue and hands to the executioner, pronounced confidently: "I have received these members from heaven; but I make little account of them in comparison of the law of my God, who will restore them to me at the day of general retribution." In fine, such is the hope

of all the just, who say, with the prince of the apostles: "But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to his promises, in which justice dwelleth." *Peter*, iii. 13.

TUESDAY.

On the spiritual Resurrection of our Souls.

1st Point. Consider—the words of St. Paul: "Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead." (2 *Tim.* ii. 8.) In this resurrection we behold a model of the spiritual resuscitation of our souls, by which we are obliged to lead a life new, holy, and divine. Jesus Christ "was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification." (*Rom.* iv. 25.) His resurrection is a passage from death to life: ours should be one from sin to grace, from vice to virtue, from self-love to charity, from the inclinations of the old man to that of the new; "For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in the newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (*Rom.* vi. 4, 5.) His glorified body is impassible; we must gain such empire over passion, as to seem exempt therefrom. His body is agile; we must with alacrity embrace all that regards the service of God. It is endowed with subtilty; we must courageously overcome all difficulties that retard our progress in perfection, and adopt a conduct and manner of life more of a spiritual and angelic, than of a human and mortal nature. His sacred body is resplendent with light and beauty; the interior light of the Divine Spirit should so illumine our understanding, replenishing it with the know-

ledge of things divine, that the exterior light of our example may infuse into the hearts of others a love and esteem for virtue.

2nd Point. Consider—it suffices not to imitate the resurrection of our Lord by resuming a new life; we must on our part endeavour to render it immortal. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is our model, was not a return to death, says St. Bernard, but a passage to eternal life. "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over him. For in that he died to sin, he died once: but that he liveth, he liveth unto God." (*Rom.* vi. 8, 9, 10.) Beware of again losing the spiritual life which has been imparted to you; relapse not into those offences which have been effaced by the tears of penance. You have prepared your heart to become the dwelling place of Jesus Christ by the confession of those sins: Will you oblige him to abandon it, by returning to the evil customs you have renounced? Do you owe him less respect when present than when preparing for his reception? Does the time of his resurrection demand less vigilance than that of his passion? Does it give more liberty for the indulgence of nature, or impose less obligation for operating good? On the contrary, it obliges us to watch more carefully over the movements of our soul, and to practise works of piety with greater fervor. The graces received during the holy season of Lent, demand this acknowledgment: he who received more shall render a more strict account. "The works that I do, says our Lord, give testimony of me." Let the sanctity of your actions testify what the sacraments have operated in you; and that you have not received the grace of God in vain. Do not dishonor the Son of God by suffering the price of his blood to become fruitless. Profit by those graces which have cost him so dear, remembering that the habit of virtues, which is acquired by repeated acts, is weakened and lost by their intermission.

3rd Point. Consider—that our perseverance in grace, and consequently our spiritual resurrection should continue until death. Be faithful unto death, says our Lord, and I will give you the crown of life. Between the glorified resurrection of the body, and the spiritual resurrection of the soul, there exists this difference; that of the body shall not take place until the consummation of ages, but this of the soul should not be deferred an instant: at the moment of repentance the sinner passes from the state of sin to that of grace. As the body dies but once, it shall be but once resuscitated; the resurrection of the soul can be reiterated: for as human frailty causes man by relapsing into sin to destroy the life of the soul, the goodness of God has prepared for him a means of rising again by the sacrament of penance. The resurrection of the body is deferred to the last day, and will endure for eternity: that of the soul is daily in our power unto death; after that moment there is no resource. On the moment of death depends a life of glory, alike for soul and body. If the soul be not resuscitated before death, the body shall rise indeed, but only to a life of eternal wo! Should we not then labour seriously to preserve the spiritual life of the soul during this mortal life, lest death surprise us in the state of sin. Leave the care of the body to Divine Providence, fearless either of suffering or death: time is destined to cultivate and sanctify the soul, eternity to glorify both soul and body.

WEDNESDAY.

On the time of the Resurrection.

1st Point. Consider—the words of Jesus Christ: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it

up." (*John*, ii. 19.) In these three days our Lord instructs us by his example what we are to do, and what we are to expect from his goodness. On the first he carries his cross, suffers and dies thereon. In this we must imitate him during the course of our mortal life. Our Lord says: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." (*Luke*, ix. 23.) "You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice." (*John*, xvi. 20.) Behold your portion in this life. On the second his body rests in the tomb, and his blessed soul also enjoys its repose. Thus after death our bodies will remain in the earth, our souls, if no debt remains to be cancelled in the purifying flames of purgatory, will enter into eternal repose. On the third the soul of our Lord is re-united to his body, and communicates to it a glorious and immortal life. This is what we expect at the day of general resurrection, when the prediction of the prophet shall be accomplished. "He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." (*Osee*, vi. 3.) Reverse not the order of God; if you die not with Jesus Christ, you cannot partake of his resurrection. Unless you despoil yourself of the old man, you cannot bear the image of the heavenly one.

2nd Point. Consider—Our Lord arises from the dead on the first day of the week, the same on which God said in the beginning: "Be light made, and light was made." (*Gen.* i. 3.) On this day also he clothes his sacred humanity with a glory more resplendent than the sun. He sheds on his disciples the light of faith and charity; on his infant church that evangelic spirit which, according to the prophet, shall quickly diffuse itself over the entire world "Expect me, saith the Lord, in the day of my resurrection that is to come, for my judgment is to assemble the Gentiles, and to gather the kingdoms" (*Soph.* iii. 8.) in the one faith.

In fine, on this day he communicated the light of grace to penitent sinners, in imparting to his apostles the power of remitting their guilt in the tribunal of penance, which he established for the sanctification of our souls. According to the apostles, Jesus Christ "was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification," to accomplish by his resurrection what he had merited by his death; because, had he not risen, man would not have believed in him, and consequently would not have been justified. Reflect here on your own interior state, whether the Son of God has been resuscitated in your heart, and shed therein a new light of love and joy, together with the spirit of penance. Can you say, with St. Gregory Nazianzen: "Yesterday I died with Jesus Christ, to-day I resume a new life. Yesterday I was buried with him; to-day I am resuscitated." The obdurate heart alone is left in darkness, because it is an enemy to the light. If you participate not in the fruit of his resurrection, it is because you close your heart or feign not to hear his voice, lest you be obliged to follow his inspirations.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ arises at the dawn of day, when the sun revives all the beauty of nature, and in the season of spring, when the flowers and fruits of the earth resume a new life. "My flesh hath flourished again," he says by his prophet. The flesh of our Lord had flourished at his entrance into the world; it flourishes in coming forth as a flower from the tomb, and exhaling the odour of immortality. Therefore, St. Ambrose observes that there exists a striking relation between the birth of our Lord and hi issuing from the sepulchre, the latter having the advantage of giving him a more glorious birth; for whereas the Virgin brought him forth mortal, the tomb restored him immortal. Remark that our Lord expired three hours after noon, in the decline of the day, and arose about three hours after midnight, at the rising of the sun. St. Chrysologus says, that the sun anticipated

the ordinary hour, on the day of our Lord's resurrection, to compensate for the darkness in which the world was enveloped on the day of his passion. This pious reflection admonishes you to redouble your fervour at this holy time, in order to repair so many precious moments due to the service of God, and lost through your negligence. Listen to the tender invitation of your victorious Saviour: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come: for winter is now past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers have appeared in our land." (*Cant.* ii. 10, 11, 12.) Arise quickly, for the sun of justice comes to enlighten your darkness, chase away your enemies, warm your coldness, and cause all the virtues to flourish in your soul.

THURSDAY.

On the Eucharist as a pledge of the Resurrection.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus Christ in his resurrection restores with advantage the gift of the divine Eucharist. His resurrection is a re-establishment of this adorable mystery in its full perfection and plenitude. Before the passion he gave his sacred body mortal and passible; having arisen now, he gives it immortal and impassible: so that not content with having employed his mortal life in labouring for our salvation, he would also, in the excess of his charity, employ therein his glorified life, and join eternity with time, for the work of our sanctification. O infinite Goodness! we deserved to be for ever deprived of this celestial bread, as ungrateful and rebellious children; nevertheless he dispenses it to us on the very day of his resurrection, gratuitously, and for ever. Death shall not deprive us of this heavenly gift. "Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more." (*Rom.* vi. 9.)

Amiable Saviour, why am I not as constant in loving thee, as thou art in replenishing me with thy benefits? O blessed day of the resurrection, "day of bread and of light," that restores the divine lamb whom love had immolated on the cross, and still daily immolates on the altar! Truly, each day we communicate should be to us a paschal feast; our joy should equal that of the disciples in beholding Jesus Christ arisen, since we receive him, bright and glorious as he issued from the tomb, though veiled under the sacramental species.

O Father of the world to come, impart to thy children a new life, that we may no longer live, but for him who died and arose again for our sakes.

2nd POINT. Consider—Jesus Christ, in the blessed Eucharist makes us partakers of his resurrection, by impressing on our souls, qualities conformable to the four endowments of his glorified body:—Prudence, for our own guidance, and for enlightening others by our example;—Justice, which imparts to the will a wonderful facility in the practice of good works, corresponding to agility in the body;—Fortitude, which controls the irascible appetite, enabling it to surmount all obstacles, as a glorified body penetrates every opposing difficulty; Temperance, which governs the carnal appetite, giving a certain spiritual impassibility, rendering us insensible or rather inaccessible to sensual pleasure and inordinate passions, leaving us at liberty to act according to the lights of reason and grace. The holy Eucharist also communicates to the body a special right to a glorious resurrection, founded on the formal promise of Jesus Christ, who assures us: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath life everlasting; and I will raise him up in the last day." (*John* vi. 55.) Whereon St Cyril, explaining these words, says that it is in virtue of their union with the sacred body of Christ, that ours shall be raised up. Therefore St. Ignatius calls the holy Eucharist the remedy of

immortality; and the church styles it the pledge of eternal life.

3rd Point. Consider—in receiving the inestimable gift of the Eucharist, and celebrating the divine mysteries, we make public profession of believing, honouring, and commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For although the sacrifice of the mass is, in effect, the same as that of the cross, and Jesus Christ is on the altar in a state of mystic death; nevertheless, as we commemorate therein the mystery of the resurrection, his sacred body is there also resuscitated glorious, and renders ours spiritual and glorious like itself. Wherefore the priest, commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ together with his passion, when breaking the host, puts one part into the chalice, for marking the re-union of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ on the day of his rising from the tomb. Where, my brethren, says St. Augustin, would the Saviour be known after his resurrection, but in the breaking of bread? Be assured, we enjoy the same blessing; we break the sacramental bread, and therein recognise our Lord. Consequently, whoever is faithful—whoever bears not in vain the name of Christian—whoever enters the church by a legitimate right—let him be consoled in the breaking of bread. Jesus Christ, though seated at the right hand of the Father, is nevertheless present on the altar, under the mystic species: his divine word is the foundation of that faith by which you believe what you behold not.

Adorable Saviour! how great is my confusion in approaching thy sacred table with faith so weak, charity so cold, and a heart so dissipated! Enlighten my darkness, O Lord, by one of those rays that issued from thy glorified body, and impart to my soul dispositions suitable to this adorable mystery, that so thy promise may be fulfilled in my regard: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." (*John*, vi. 52.)

FRIDAY.

On the delay of the General Resurrection.

1st Point. Consider—the spiritual resurrection of the soul must be effected during the present life; that of the body is deferred until the consummation of ages, for three reasons:—to give us a horror of sin, which is the death of the soul, by the image of corporal death, which, though terrible to the senses, is nevertheless but a shadow of the former. Had we light to discover the deformity of sin, we could not behold it and live. One sin, says St. Chrysostom, has rendered the demons so horrible, that if God permitted them to appear visibly, the sight would strike us dead. St. Frances of Rome says, she would willingly have cast herself into a burning furnace, to avoid the view of a demon that had appeared to her. St. Catherine of Sienna assures us, she would rather walk through flames than behold for the shortest space one of those hideous forms. We should avail ourselves of the consideration of death, and the innumerable evils of this life, in order to conceive a fear of sin, which is the only cause of these fatal effects.

2nd Point. Consider—the second cause of this delay is, to give us an opportunity of practising the most exalted virtues; for in the hour of suffering and death we may exercise, in a more perfect and heroic manner, acts of humility, when we behold ourselves returning to the dust of the tomb, where all the glory of the world lies buried—acts of patience and resignation to the will of God, under all the pains that accompany sickness; of obedience in our dependence on those who assist us; of confidence in God, and abandonment to his mercy, for the eternity into which we are about to enter; in fine, acts of piety, gratitude, and religion, offering ourselves to sufferings and death, in imitation and acknowledgment of the love which Jesus Christ

has manifested in dying for us on the cross. How admirable the wisdom and goodness of our merciful Saviour, who has converted the penalty of sin—that is to say, death—into an excellent means of exercising all the virtues! And whereas it was said to the first man, and to all his posterity: "If thou sinnest, thou shalt die; now it is said: "Die, that thou mayest be delivered from sin."—*St. Augustin.* Henceforth we need not fear either malady, or pain, or death, for we are consoled in the hope of a glorious resurrection. Let us ask nothing, for the present, but that precious food which is dispensed from the altar, and which effects in the soul a spiritual resurrection, that renders it invulnerable and impassible to all the shafts of the enemy, prompt and active in the practice of virtues, vigorous in surmounting all impediments to the accomplishment of the divine will, bright by the example of a holy life, and immortal by divine love, which will unite us to God by bonds so sweet and strong, as neither life nor death shall be able to dissolve.

3rd Point. Consider—the third cause of the delay of the general resurrection is, the homage rendered to God by the sacrifice of our life, and the opportunity afforded thereby of attaining the highest point of perfection, by exercising the noblest act of divine love, which is, to suffer and die for the service of God or the salvation of our neighbour. This is the most heroic degree of zeal, according to Jesus Christ, who says: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (*John*, xv. 13.) Therefore St. Augustin calls the martyrs the princes of the church, holding the first rank, and worthy of being imitated and honoured by all. Again, he asks: Why are the martyrs so elevated in glory, and crowned with a diadem of peculiar splendour? Why are they distinguished amongst the dead? The church prays not for them, but recommends herself to their prayers.

Whence is this? Because death, which they endured rather than deny Jesus Christ, is assuredly bitter and dreadful to nature. Let us then implore their prayers, that we may walk in their steps, because they have fulfilled the most perfect act of charity, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Thus, my divine Saviour, through thy infinite goodness, death is become a remedy instead of a punishment in regard of thy servants; it is no longer an object of fear, but of love. Thou dost inspire us with contempt of the present life, in presenting us with a pledge of the future in the participation of thy precious body, the viaticum of our pilgrimage, which leads us, through death itself, to immortality.

SATURDAY.

On our Lord appearing to the Blessed Virgin.

1st Point. Consider—the supereminent love the Blessed Virgin bore her divine Son merited the privilege of being the first to behold him after his resurrection. It has been observed, that blessed Magdalen deserved to be the first to partake of the joy of the resurrection amongst those mentioned in the gospel, because she more ardently loved Jesus Christ. But the love which glowed in the immaculate heart of Mary incomparably exceeded the united love of angels and saints. St. Bonaventure calls her the source of love, because her charity, like the living waters of the fountains, cease not. Blessed Amadis says, that through her we will not fail to obtain, besides all other gifts, in a special manner that of divine charity, which is so necessary, as St. Augustin observes, that without it all other goods are useless, and charity alone supplies the want of every

other. We must love God before we can behold him in his glory, for to those only who love will he manifest himself. In order to obtain this divine love, we must address ourselves to her, the overflowing joy of whose charity in the triumph of her divine Son, is proportioned to its intense agony when she stood beside his gibbet. Therefore justly do we unite with the universal church in the Antiphon—"Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven!"

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ appeared first to his blessed Mother, because he loved her most. If never mother so loved a son, never did son so love a mother. She loved him in poverty and sorrow, in cold and want—amid the pains of exile—when the tyrant's sword was unsheathed against him—when he wore the wreathed thorns upon his brow—and when, with a breaking heart, she stood sprinkled with his blood, and listening to his death-sobs at the foot of the cross. And he, in selecting her for his mother, exhibited a love of preference for her which no mind can conceive, no tongue express. He showed his love for her, by drawing from her pure breast the sustenance of his mortal life in his childhood—by making his youth a sacrifice of obedience to her—by giving her, as his dearest bequest to his orphan church, in the person of the beloved disciple, when expiring on the cross—and now, in the glory of his triumph, by making her a medium of his choicest graces. Was it not suitable that, on coming forth from the tomb, his first visit should be to her who was so dear and so closely united with him? What interchanges of sentiments between such a son and such a mother! What was the reciprocal joy of the hearts of Jesus and Mary! With what transports of tender and respectful love does she kiss the sacred wounds of his hands, his feet, and his heart!

O Queen of Heaven, rejoice, because thy divine Son is risen according to his promise. Praise the Lord, and

rejoice in his presence; praise the Lord, and beseech him to look upon us with an eye of mercy, that we may be restored to his love, on which all our happiness depends. Do you prove your love of Jesus as the Blessed Virgin did, by works, sacrifices, and suffering? Has he not given you the most tender and special marks of his love—in the grace of your vocation—making you the mother of his suffering and afflicted members, or the instrument of their salvation—in becoming for you, on the altar, a prodigy of obedience—in becoming the food of your spiritual life in the Eucharist?

3rd Point. Consider—the Son of God appeared first to his blessed Mother, because she had participated most deeply in the sorrows of his death. This virgin mother remained in solitude, pouring forth her ardent prayer, and addressing her divine Son in language dictated by a charity the most intense. "My well-beloved Son, my only glory, come forth from the obscurity of the tomb, and dissipate the darkness with which I am surrounded." Incomparable Mother, behold thy divine Son; it is no longer the beloved disciple, the adopted son; it is thy only begotten Son, the fruit of thy womb; it is no longer the man of sorrows, but the king of glory. He is risen, immortal, impassible, glorious, and resplendent with light. He returns victorious over death, bearing away the spoil of hell, and *leading captivity captive.* "The sea saw and fled: Jordan was turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, and ye hills like the lambs of the flock. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou didst flee: and thou, O Jordan, that thou wast turned back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye hills like lambs of the flock? At the presence of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God of Jacob: who turned the rock into pools of water." (*Ps.* cxiii. 3, *et seq.*) To the blessed Virgin at the foot of the cross, we may apply

the words of the prophet—"O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." (*Lam.* i. 12.) Now we may apply to her the words of David—"According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy consolations have made my soul joyful." (*Ps.* xciii. 19.) If sin has so chilled the generous affections of your nature as to prevent you from participating in the joy of your Saviour's resurrection, beg of that compassionate mother to offer on your behalf the oblation of her ineffable joy and thanksgiving.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On the holy Women visiting the Tomb of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—the love these holy women bear to Jesus Christ, and which leads them early in the morning to visit his tomb, is a love stronger than death. For they lost not the remembrance of our divine Lord when removed from their sight. They enshrined his memory in their hearts, where he still lived after his decease. This love followed him even to the tomb, illustrating the words of the wise man, that the true friend loves beyond all time, even to eternity. Is it thus you love Jesus Christ? Do you frequently remember him during the day, and does your heart seek him at your waking moment? Is this remembrance active? Does it lead to mortification and the practice of good works? Do you seek occasions of renewing it in the minds of others? Do you love to make him the subject of your conversation? It is said that blessed Magdalen led the other holy women with her to the sepulchre. Your morning prayer should perform for you this good office, and animate all the actions of the day with a holy fervour and tender recol-

lection of your merciful Redeemer. Let this be your familiar practice; and frequently during the day address your Divine Lord, saying: Thou art my joy, and my only consolation is the remembrance of thy mercies and the benefits conferred by thy infinite liberality.

2nd Point. Consider—the love of these holy women is generous and courageous: generous, in bringing their precious perfumes to anoint the sacred body; courageous, for they feared no difficulty, though soldiers guarded the sepulchre, and its entrance was closed by a stone which they could not remove; nevertheless, they pursue their enterprise with devotion, and walk diligently amidst the darkness which the rising sun has not yet dissipated. Their example instructs you to surmount with courage all obstacles to the execution of your good resolutions. A soul that confides in God fears nothing; she says in the fervour of her love: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." A tepid soul is dejected by the least opposition. In every state of spiritual life there is a stone, which, like that closing the sepulchre, arrests the progress of those who are wanting in confidence and courage. That which impedes the penitent sinner, is the inclination to evil. Difficulties in effecting good, retard those who advance in the path of virtue. But if you love Jesus Christ, his divine spirit will remove these obstacles at the first step you make in his service. Again, the holy women instruct you to be generous towards God. Divine love never says *it is enough*. It desires to participate in every good work, and to contribute to the relief of the suffering members of Christ, on whom they pour the precious perfume of Christian charity. When such opportunity presents itself, spare neither your fortune, nor your convenience, nor pains, nor humiliations, nor whatever the Son of God may demand of you: say with St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

3rd Point. Consider—the love these holy women bear our Lord is accompanied with profound respect and singular wisdom. Their desire of embalming his sacred body was ardent, nevertheless they await the termination of the sabbath, in order to comply with the obligation of the law, and when the following day begins to dawn, they depart without delay. Thus zeal should not be precipitate, neither should it be tardy or languid. True charity is equally fervent and discreet, according to the admonition of the Apostle, *doing all things in order*. Happy is he who commences every action by the light of grace, and who faithfully corresponds with its inspirations. For this end you should have continual recourse to prayer, that you may obtain the light of heaven to direct, and divine love to animate you in the discharge of every duty.

Thou, O Lord, hast said, "Let the heavens be made," and thy word is instantly accomplished. Thou hast commanded the stars of the firmament to shine forth, and they promptly obeyed. Whence is it that having so often said, Be humble, charitable, persevering, I have notwithstanding been deaf to thy summons and disobedient to thy command? Is not thy word omnipotent? I know, my God, that my rebellious will resists thee; but, canst thou not bend the most inflexible? Change then my heart in thy infinite mercy; that every obstacle to my perfection being removed, I may walk with gladness in the narrow path of thy law, which is my most ardent desire.

MONDAY.

On the apparition of the Angels to the holy Women.

1st Point. Consider—"How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart." (*Ps.* lxxii. 1.) Of

this the offices rendered by the angel to the holy women, are certain proofs. For them he descends from heaven, removes the stone from the sepulchre. remains sitting thereon to instruct and prepare them for receiving the first visit of Jesus Christ after his resurrection; in fine, to take away all cause of fear, "the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men. And the angel answering, said to the women: Fear not you; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified." (*Matt.* xxviii. 4, 5.) What should the soul fear who seeks Jesus Christ? Is it penance? This is a heavy stone and difficult to carry. But the angel of the Lord, that is to say, the unction of the Holy Ghost, will render it light. Is it temptation? Thou, O Lord, makest my lamp to shine: my God, illuminate my darkness; by thee I shall be delivered from temptation. Is it poverty and contempt? God is our refuge and our strength; he is our protector in the afflictions that assail us. Is it the power of the enemies that oppose our good designs? The Lord is with us, whom shall we fear? The success of our enterprises depends not on human strength, but on the favour of the Omnipotent. How often have you experienced the care of Jesus Christ over his faithful servants; the goodness with which his paternal providence sustains their weakness, protects them in danger, consoles them by his divine inspirations in the pursuit of virtue?

O Lord, how good art thou to those who hope in thee, and to the soul who seeketh thee! How imperative our obligation to correspond with thy love, and seek in all things thy greater glory!

2nd Point. Consider—you must seek Jesus Christ crucified, that you may see him one day glorified. "Thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross. Why then art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leads to a kingdom? In the cross is salvation: in the cross is

life. Take up, therefore, thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting." (*Imit.* b. ii. c. 12.) We must seek Jesus crucified with great purity of intention and disinterested love. You must seek him in the light of God. For divine faith and wisdom are requisite that we may discover the infinite treasures hidden in the cross of Jesus Christ. It is in vain for you to rise before light. (*Ps.* cxxvi. 2.) The spouse sought him during the night, and found him not. You must implore the light of the divine Spirit and imitate these holy women, who allowed the night to pass before they repaired to the sepulchre. Whatever labour a soul may undergo in seeking Jesus Christ, she will not find him unless she be enlightened by the Holy Ghost. Hence there are so few persons who seek God purely for his own sake. St. Bernard says—"It is an act of singular purity and rare perfection to seek God, not for his benefits, but for himself alone." There are few who arrive at this degree of virtue: endeavour to be of this small and happy number; cease not to labour until you can say: I seek but God alone.

Such is the resolution I this day form in thy divine presence: "My heart hath said to thee: my face hath sought thee: thy face, O Lord, will I still seek. Turn not away thy face from me; decline not in thy wrath from thy servant. Be thou my helper, forsake me not; do not thou despise me, O God, my Saviour." (*Ps.* xxvi. 8, 9.)

3rd Point. Consider—those who seek Jesus Christ shall assuredly find him. The holy women sought him crucified, they find him resuscitated. They sought him amongst the dead, they find him living and glorified. If you seek Jesus Christ with your whole heart during life, you will find him at the moment of death; when he will bestow on you an immortal crown of glory, and *make you drink of the torrent of his delights for eternity.* The angel, seated on the stone of the sepulchre, repre-

sents the state of beatitude that Jesus Christ has acquired for you by his death. "His countenance was as lightning," (*Matt.* xxviii. 3,) which discovers to us the brightness of the glorified bodies. "His raiment, as snow," (*Matt.* xxviii. 3,) marks the joy of the resurrection: and the stone on which he is seated, the immortal state of the blessed. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you, who, by the power of God, are kept by faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations. That the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which is tried by fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 *Peter*, i. 3. *et seq.*)

TUESDAY.

On the holy Women entering the Sepulchre.

1st Point. Consider—the tomb should not be an object of terror. "Be not affrighted," (*Mark*, xvi. 6,) said the angel to the holy women, as they entered the sepulchre of our Lord. The tomb is a place of repose, where our bodies are deposited until the general resurrection. It is a place of glory, whence the just shall come forth resplendent with the rays of immortality. It is a passage to a blessed eternity, which the Saviour has opened to us by his victory over death. Who shall henceforth fear the darkness and dust of the tomb, since it is the source of immortal life? Whence did holy Job derive consolation in his extreme sufferings?

From the reflection—"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God my Saviour. Whom I shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this, my hope, is laid up in my bosom." (*Job*, xix. 25.) Admirable patience! powerful effect of hope in the resurrection! The thought that the abject condition of his body would one day be changed, and rendered conformable to the glory of his Redeemer, so strengthened him, that he beheld the miserable state to which he was reduced without feeling abhorrence. His heart is not dejected; on the contrary, he prefers his dunghill to a throne—the worms that devour his flesh, to the splendour of a regal crown; and the dignity of his ancestors seems to him less honourable than the corruption which he calls his father.

2nd Point. Consider—in order to be resuscitated with the Son of God, we must, with the holy women, enter into his sepulchre, and be buried therein. When the body is laid in the tomb, it moulders into dust; in like manner you should incessantly labour to destroy the body of sin, with its evil customs and corrupt inclinations. "Know you not, that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer." (*Rom.* vi. 3, *et seq.*) On these words St. Chrysostom observes, it is a certain mark that we possess Jesus Christ, and that his spirit lives in us, if we resemble a dead body laid in the tomb. A man dead, buried, and hidden in the tomb, no longer

cares for the goods of the world; he entertains no desire of honour; he is neither moved by praise or dispraise; he is equally insensible to injuries or caresses, to pleasure or sorrow. Such is a perfectly mortified Christian, who follows not the appetite of the "earthly man," who has destroyed the sources of sensuality, who lives as if he were no longer in the flesh. Until you shall have arrived at this degree of perfection, you have made little progress in the service of God, and are not solidly established in virtue.

3rd POINT. Consider—the sacred body of Jesus Christ, which we receive at the paschal solemnity as a pledge of our resurrection, is on the altar in a state of mystic death. Your heart should be as the tomb wherein is to be laid this precious treasure. Let the purity and innocence of your soul be his shroud, the odour of your virtues the perfumes to embalm him, your heart, sealed with his divine love, and defended by the angelic host, the place where his body shall repose. Such was the desire of St. Mectilde, at this holy time in which we celebrate the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, and his glorious resurrection. Imitate the devotion of this great saint; purify your heart—make it a new monument, by casting off the old man, with his terrestrial affections; but take care the inscription be not like to that of the sepulchre, and that it be not said: "He is risen, he is not here." (*Mark*, xvi. 6.) Wo to that heart in which Jesus Christ "is not." Guard him faithfully in your own, for your happiness and glory consist in his dwelling perpetually therein. Of a sepulchre he will then render it a heaven. According to the excellent idea of St. Chrysologus, the heart in which Jesus Christ lives and reigns is a heaven; that in which he is dead and buried is a sepulchre. Remember that the paschal time is a time of passage, as St. Bernard observes: let it not be one of return. Relapse not into your evil customs, but follow the counsel of the angel: go into

Galilee—that is to say, a place of passage; pass from vice to virtue, from darkness to light, from earth to heaven. There you will behold the Son of God in the splendour of his eternal glory.

WEDNESDAY.

On Saints Peter and John repairing to the Sepulchre.

1st Point. Consider—"Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and she saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre. She ran therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith to them: They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." (*John*, xx. 12.) "And these words seemed to them idle tales: and they did not believe them." (*Mark*, ii. 11.) It is an act of infidelity to refuse our assent when there are just motives for belief, but it is an act of imprudence to believe lightly, and without discernment: both one and the other are equally dangerous. The first man sinned by credulity, and St. Thomas by incredulity. Avoid these two extremes. Believe not lightly, and you shall not be deceived. Be not too much attached to your own judgment, "but prove the spirits, if they be of God." When you are engaged in holy conversation, imitate not these disciples who deserved to be reprehended for their little faith, in taking as reveries what was related regarding the apparition of the angels, and the resurrection of their Master. Never make that which is holy a subject of raillery. Ridicule not the simplicity of those who discourse with you on matters of piety. "Holy conferences on spiritual subjects serve much to

increase piety, particularly when they pass between persons who are united in God, and who have but one and the same heart and spirit." (*Imitat.* b. i. c. 10.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Peter, therefore, went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the sepulchre." (*John*, xx. 3.) St. Augustin says, that joy impelled them to go with speed, and that this joy proceeded from the love they bore their Master, and their faith in his resurrection. Remark here the signal effects of those two virtues. "The lover flies, runs, and rejoices; he is free, and not held. He feels no burden, values no labour, would willingly do more than he can; he complains not of impossibility, because he conceives that he may and can do all things. He is able to do anything, and performs and effects many things where he that loves not faints and lies down. He that loveth must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of his beloved, and never suffer himself to be turned away from him by any contrary occurrences whatsoever." (*Imitat.* b. iii. c. 5.) He who has a lively faith, and looks beyond this present life, is not troubled by the terrors of death, the loss of friends, or the ruin of fortune; but, like a glowing flame, he elevates himself on high, because he knows "that there is for us another life and another world, more happy and more lasting than the present." (*St. Gregory Nazianzen.*) Imitate these two great Apostles, Peter and John; let a holy emulation, like that with which they ran to the tomb, lead you to embrace fervently every occasion of practising virtue. This fervour is the characteristic of great saints, who are always zealous to prevent others, in duties in which humility and charity are exercised. Learn with what diligence you should fulfil those offices of charity towards the poor, which your state of life demands, lest another prevent and deprive you of the merit intended for you. "Hold that which thou hast," says the Apostle, "lest another take thy crown."

3rd Point. Consider—"And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And when he stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying; but yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen cloths lying. And the napkin that had been about his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, wrapt up into one place: then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulchre: and he saw, and believed." (*John*. xx. 4, *et seq.*) In St. John is personified the contemplative, and in St. Peter the active life. Both must be united, for we should not cease to run in the way of perfection until we arrive at the tomb—that is, at perfection; but the more we advance, the more humble we should become, remembering the words of St. Paul: "The eye cannot say to the hand, I need you not." (1 *Cor.*) St. Gregory of Nyssa observes, that by our works we may discover whether the lights of our mind be not vain and deceitful The eye discovers the crown, but the hand lays hold on it. The eye discovers the enemy, but the hand combats, and gains the victory. In fine, the eye contemplates heaven, but the hand opens it by the exercise of good works.

My divine and glorious Master, who givest light to our eyes and strength to our hands, to be employed continually in thy service, enkindle also in our hearts the fire of thy love, that being inflamed therewith, we may run on with renewed vigour in the way of thy commandments, and seek thee, not in the tomb amongst the dead, but in heaven, where thou reignest with thy saints for ever and ever. Amen.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus Christ appearing to Magdalen.

1st Point. Consider—the happiness of this penitent saint, who merited to see Jesus Christ in the glory of his resurrection, the first after his Virgin Mother. She obtained this grace by the fervour of her desires, the abundance of her tears, and her perseverance. The love she bore the Son of God, made her conceive an ardent desire to visit his tomb, and embalm his sacred body; and this desire, which sprung from an ardent charity, was an excellent disposition for receiving the grace which our Lord designed to impart to her. Thus Jesus Christ excites our desires, only that he may replenish us with his gifts. Magdalen not finding what she sought, had recourse to tears, which are not less powerful with the heart of her Master, than her desires; for by tears she obtained all that she desired from Jesus Christ. By tears of compunction she effaced her sins; by tears of devotion and love she merited the happiness of seeing Jesus Christ in the glory of his resurrection. Her love is perseverant, and surmounts every obstacle The other devout women retire, but love and grief detain Magdalen at the tomb. She fears nothing, because having lost her Master, she has no other loss to apprehend. Jesus being the only object of her love, no other than himself can afford her consolation. She sought him first without effect; but by perseverance she merited to see him before all the others. Delay increased her desire, and her increasing desire is changed into joy at finding him whom she sought. Are your good desires ardent? Are they efficacious? Are they persevering? Can you at least say with the prophet: Lord, I feel not these generous desires of pleasing and serving thee that burn in the hearts of thy saints, but I earnestly desire

and humbly implore them: let thy mercy be propitious to my prayer.

2nd Point. Consider—"But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre. And she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." (*John*, xx. 11, 12, 13.) Such is our misery, and a just subject for our tears: and nevertheless, how often do we lose without regret the presence of Jesus Christ! To be deprived of a trifle, a nothing, grieves us to excess; yet we lose Jesus Christ, and remain insensible to our loss. We know not where they have laid him, yet we seek him not. But where have you laid him? Do you desire to know where he is? He is in your heart, if humility, patience, mortification, and charity reign therein. If these virtues are wanting, you possess not Jesus Christ. Your murmurs, your vanity, your self-love chase him away, and you have reason to complain that your defects have taken away your Master. Our Lord presents himself to Magdalen, but she knows him not; he says to her, "Woman: why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, thinking it was the gardener saith to him: Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." (*John*, xx. 15.) How powerful the love which animates the heart of this holy penitent! nothing seems impossible: she undertakes what cannot be accomplished but by a miracle. She is ready for all things; nothing, however difficult, repels her; she embraces all with the most ardent affection. Is such your disposition? Are you resolved to do and suffer all that is necessary in order to find God? Are you ready to quit all things for his sake? If not, you are unworthy to behold him in his glory.

3rd Point. Consider—the admirable change which Jesus Christ effects by a single word in the heart of Magdalen. "Jesus saith to her: Mary. She turning. saith to him: Rabboni (which is to say, Master)." O could you penetrate the sense of these two words: 'Master! Mary!" Could you enter into the hearts whence they proceed, what wonders would you there discover! What tenderness and sweetness in the heart of Jesus! What transports of joy in that of Mary! Hitherto her senses and the powers of her soul were abyssed in profound sorrow; but in an instant the voice of her Master dissipates all the gloom of her mind, and replenishes her with heavenly consolation. Her heart is dilated with joy, its tenderest affections are elicited at the sight of Jesus; she would embrace his sacred feet, but he prevents her, saying: "Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say to them: I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God." (*John*, xx. 17.) Go, he says, impart to my brethren the good tidings; I cannot leave them longer in affliction. You shall see me again before I ascend to my Father, and you shall not lose the fruit of your obedience. Learn to moderate your joy, however holy and spiritual its source. It is also a weakness and defect to be troubled and dejected in desolation, as it marks a want of confidence in the divine goodness, which testifies no less love in depriving us for a time of the sweetness of consolation, that this dispensation may render us more vigilant. The merit of the soul consists not in divine consolation, but in a more submissive obedience, more profound and sincere humility, and a more ardent love of God and our neighbour. Fear not to quit Jesus Christ—like Magdalen, to aid and console your brethren. He will restore with advantage what you have quitted for his love.

FRIDAY.

On Jesus appearing to the holy Women.

1st Point. Consider—"And behold Jesus met them, saying: All hail." (*Matt.* xxviii. 9.) Admire the goodness of the Son of God in presenting himself to the holy women, and the love he bears to souls redeemed by his blood. On how many occasions does he present himself to you, and testify the care with which he watches in your regard? St. Chrysologus says: When you go diligently where obedience calls, Jesus presents himself to bless your labours, and crown them with a happy issue. When you repair fervently to prayer, when you faithfully observe your rules, when you conceive holy thoughts, and fervent desires of mortification, or of performing some good work, Jesus presents himself to you, and honours you with his presence. He says to you: I am thy salvation, thy joy, and thy life. Happy is that soul which heareth the Lord speaking within her, and from his mouth receiveth the word of comfort! Happy the eyes which are shut to outward things, and attentive to the interior. Mind these things, O my soul, and shut the doors of thy senses, that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God speaks within thee.

O King of glory, who changes our darkness into light, and our tears into joy, by thy divine presence, hide not thy countenance from me in the hour of affliction. Grant me thy merciful assistance, particularly at the moment of death, when all creatures will abandon me, and the world will flee from my sight. Be thou then my protection, and I shall not fear my enemies, for nothing can harm him whom thou defendest.

2nd Point. Consider—"But they came up and took hold of his feet, and adored him." (*Matt.* xxviii. 9.)

You advance towards Jesus Christ when you embrace every opportunity of making progress in perfection. "They embrace his feet." This, says St. Chrysologus, is an effect of the bounty of Jesus Christ; no one can approach unless he first presents himself. It is our part to correspond faithfully with grace when it is offered, otherwise it passes away and is lost. We shall profit by it if we humble ourselves before God, and refer all that we do to his glory. "And took hold of his feet." Such is the humiliation which is our due. "And adored him." Such is the honour we should render to him, saying with the prophet Daniel: to thee, O Lord, appertaineth justice, for all good proceeds from thee; as for us, confusion is our due, because without thee we can do only that which is evil. Were you established in this perfect contempt of yourself, you would enjoy the greatest peace that can be possessed in this life. Then all those vain imaginations, those useless cares under which you labour, would be dissipated; you would be delivered from all immoderate fear, and self-love would be destroyed. Aspire, by all your efforts, your prayers, and desires, to this great good, to the end that, being despoiled of self, you may be clothed with Jesus Christ, and that, being dead to yourself, you may live with him eternally.

3rd Point. Consider—the different conduct which our Lord holds with regard to these holy women and to Magdalen. To the latter he says, "Do not touch me," (*John*, xx. 17), and to the former, "Fear not." In both he is equally good, for it is no less a favour to refuse what is injurious than to grant what is profitable. Learn hence, that indiscreet fervour is displeasing to God, and that we must never forget that respect which is his due. Neither should we yield to excessive fear, nor any other inordinate feeling. He is the friend of peace and tranquillity of mind; and in order to receive his divine communications, we must approach him with

this preparation of heart. Do not suppose that your life is perfect, when all things happen according to your desire, or that you are particularly loved by God, because he grants your petitions, or favours you with sensible devotion. These are not the marks which distinguish the truly virtuous. The perfection of the spiritual man consists in an entire consecration of the heart and will to God, without self-interest in things either great or little, either in time or eternity; receiving good and evil with equal thanksgiving. Then will Jesus Christ present himself to that soul, and make it sensible of a heavenly light and joy. He will say to it, as to the holy women: "Fear not. Go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, there they shall see me." (*Matt.* xxviii 10.) He will replenish it with his graces, that they may be communicated to those whom he regards and cherishes as his brethren, the adopted children of his Father, and co-heirs of his kingdom. Imitate his charity towards your brethren. If you can render them a service, do it graciously; if you cannot assist them, at least let your refusal be meek and courteous. Where the power is wanting, God is satisfied with a good will, and to this he awards a crown of merit. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (*Luke*, vi. 36.) Then shall your recompense be great, and you shall be the children of the Most High, whose benefits are extended even to his enemies.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus appearing to St. Peter and St. James.

1st Point. Consider—"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." (*Luke*, xxiv. 34.) "After that, he was seen by James, then by all the Apostles."

(1 *Cor.* xv. 7.) "Peter went away, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." (*Luke*, xxiv. 12.) The holy fathers are of opinion that our Lord appeared first to St. Peter among the Apostles, and for this they adduce several reasons. St. Chrysostom attributes that prerogative to the dignity of St. Peter, because being chief of the Apostles, and the foundation stone of the Church, his authority gave more credit to the recital of what he had seen. St. Ambrose attributes it to the faith of the Apostle, and the ardent love he bore his divine Master. Peter, says the saint, being alone, saw the Lord; for his devotion prepared him to believe all that regarded the glory of Jesus Christ. St. Bernard says, that Jesus Christ would thus console his disciple, whose heart was penetrated with sorrow for his sin. It was truly a benignity and condescension worthy of our Saviour, to manifest himself first and singularly to him who was overwhelmed with confusion for his infidelity, in order that where sin had abounded, grace might still more abound. "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon"—that is to say, to the child of obedience. These words are a subject of joy to persons who make profession of obedience, and who may justly hope that Jesus Christ, at the hour of death, will fortify, console, and animate them in the combat, saying interiorly to their hearts: Fear not, children of obedience; fear not to look upon my pierced hands and feet, my side opened with a lance. Remember that I was attached to the cross by obedience. Children of obedience, engrave these thoughts in your mind. Rejoice with a great joy, because the Lord is truly risen, and hath appeared to Simon.

2nd Point. Consider—"After that, he was seen by James, then by all the Apostles." (1 *Cor.* xv. 7.) We may attribute the favour conferred on St. James to his eminent sanctity, his rare spirit of prayer, and especially to the sorrow he had conceived for the death of

the Son of God, and the ardour with which he sighed after his resurrection; for our Lord imparts consolation to his servants in proportion to the pains and afflictions they endure for his sake. Approach unto God, and he will approach unto you. "Be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not vain in the Lord." (1 *Cor.* xv. 58.) What might you not expect from the liberality of God, were you more liberal towards him, since faithless as you are, he confers on you so many graces? Be confounded at your tepidity, and endeavour to awaken your fervour in prayer, in holy communion, and in the practice of solid virtues, in imitation of this holy Apostle. "Jesus Christ will come to thee, discovering to thee his consolation, if thou wilt prepare a fit dwelling within thee. All his glory and beauty are in the interior, and there he pleaseth himself. Many a visit doth he make to the internal man; sweet is his communication with him, delightful his consolation, much peace, and a familiarity exceedingly to be admired. Make room, then, for Christ within thee, and deny entrance to all others. Thou hast not here a lasting city; and wherever thou art, thou art a stranger and a pilgrim; nor wilt thou ever have rest, unless thou be interiorly united to Christ. All things pass away, and thou along with them: see that thou cleave not to them, lest thou be ensnared and lost. Let thy thought be with the Most High, and thy prayer directed to Christ without intermission." (*Imitat.* b. ii., c. 1.)

3rd Point. Consider—the different manner in which these two Apostles correspond with the same grace. St. Peter, without delay, imparts to his brethren that which he had received, following the command which our Lord had given him before his passion: "And thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren." (*Luke*, xxii. 32.) St. James, on the contrary, buries it in silence. Hence we learn that we should conceal the

favours of heaven, unless obliged by duty to declare them for the edification of our neighbour. Our Lord often appears to superiors, as he did to St. Peter; that is to say, he instructs, and communicates to them many lights for the guidance of those under their charge; consequently you should listen to them with respect, renouncing your own judgment, human respect, and self-complaisance. Imitate the simplicity of the Apostles, who believed what St. Peter had related, without yielding to jealousy at the favour he had received, deferring unanimously to his authority, and believing on his word that Christ was risen. For as the author of the Imitation says: "He that has true and perfect charity seeks himself in no one thing, but desires only the glory of God in all things. He envies no man, because he loves no private joy; nor does he desire to rejoice in himself; but above all good things he wishes to be made happy in God." (*Imitat.* b. i., c. 15.) "A man that maketh haste to be rich, and envieth others, is ignorant that poverty shall come upon him." (*Prov.* xxviii. 22.) On the contrary, he who gratefully receives the lights imparted through the interposition of a creature, gains more by the practice of humility and charity than by any other grace he could desire.

My Lord Jesus Christ, grant me the faith and obedience of St. Peter, the humility and perseverance of St. James, the simplicity and charity of the other Apostles, that I may be worthy of enjoying thy presence in this time of exile, and hereafter participate in the joy of thy saints, by beholding thee eternally in heaven.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On Jesus performing the office of the good Shepherd.

1st Point. Consider—the first mark which distinguishes this good Shepherd is comprised in these words: "I know my sheep." (*John*, x. 14.) Every good shepherd must know his sheep, otherwise he could not lead them. Others know their sheep only by the exterior. Jesus Christ discerns them by their interior; since, "neither is there any creature invisible in his sight; but all things are naked and open to his eyes." (*Heb.* iv. 13.) He penetrates the depth of our hearts, our thoughts, and intentions; neither our vices nor virtues are concealed from his sight. Woe to that soul in whom he discovers nothing that can merit his approbation; in whom he recognises no mark of charity, humility, patience, or fidelity in his service. To that soul he will say, "I know you not," (*Matt.* xxv. 12,) you are not of my sheep. Who knows, says St. Bernard, speaking to his religious, whether the names of all those whom I now behold are written in the book of life? How great would be my joy were I assured of this! But, alas! the ten virgins mentioned in the Gospel expected to enter with the spouse, and nevertheless he said to five amongst them, "I know you not." O dreadful words, exclaims St. Chrysostom; better to be stricken with a thunderbolt, than to hear their terrific sounds. Ah! Lord, what will it avail me to be known by men, if I am unknown to thee? I would rather live forgotten by all creatures, provided I have the happiness of knowing and being known by thee.

2nd Point. Consider—the second mark which distinguishes this good Shepherd is comprised in these words: "My sheep know me." (*John*, x. 14.) For as the knowledge he has of his elect is the principle of their eternal happiness, their reciprocal knowledge of him

is a necessary means to arrive thereat. Moreover, this knowledge of Jesus Christ is the most assured mark of predestination, which is a mystery so hidden, that no one knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred. But lest our minds become depressed with anxiety by the uncertainty of a matter so important, God has given us certain marks on which we may found a moral hope in his mercy; amongst these the most secure is, the knowledge of Jesus Christ; not that sterile, cold, and speculative knowledge, so ordinary among Christians, but that which is strong, enlightened, effective, and, as we may say, experimental. If the predestination of the angels was founded on the respect and homage they rendered to God at the moment of their creation, how much more does that of man depend on his devotion, love, and respect towards the person of his Saviour? The tender and generous heart of Jesus Christ cannot behold his creature touched with an ardent desire to know and love him, without honouring us with his favour, and replenishing us with his benefits.

O divine Pastor, how great is thy tenderness for those who know and love thee! yet, how few are they that seek thee with a generous devotedness. Permit not, Lord, that I fall into the blindness of those who are deluded by vain glory, but that I may earnestly seek to know thee, and learn by thy words and example to despise things temporal, and desire only such as are eternal.

3rd Point. Consider—the third mark which distinguishes this good Pastor is comprised in these words: "I lay down my life for my sheep." (*John*, x. 15.) For he has given it in a manner all singular, and peculiar to himself. Jesus Christ alone could pay the price of our redemption. Where shall we find a pastor so charitable, as he who has given his life for our ransom? In whom can we repose such confidence, as in him who not only lays down his life for his sheep, but, when they

have strayed, seeks them with incessant toil, until he has found and led them back to his fold? Happy the sheep whose only ambition is to be known to this good Pastor, by their service and their virtues; whose ordinary and assiduous study is to know and love him, to obey his voice and follow his guidance. Such are living victims consecrated wholly to him, who has so generously given his life for their salvation. Let us hasten to enter with him into his fertile and delicious pasture. Out of his fold we are surrounded with fears, we are in want of all real good, and our false and fleeting pleasures are followed with disgust and bitterness. Let us hasten, then, to establish ourselves in a dwelling exempt from all fear, abounding in all that is good; a dwelling, the delights whereof are eternal. The voice of our good Pastor calls us to this blessed abode, his blood has merited for us an entrance therein, our knowledge of him conducts us to it, and we may hope that his knowledge of us, which is the mark of his sheep, will place us in the possession of it for eternity.

MONDAY.

On Jesus appearing to the two Disciples going to Emmaus.

1st Point. Consider—in the person of these disciples the blindness and weakness of man, when he removes himself from God, to seek consolation in creatures. By separating from the apostles they put themselves in danger of losing their faith, their hope, and their charity; had not the Son of God, by his prompt appearance, afforded them succour. Their faith was deadened, for they believed neither the holy women nor the apostles, who had seen the sepulchre and

assured them of the resurrection. Their hope wavered, as is evident from these words—"We hoped that it was he that should have redeemed Israel." (*Luke*, xxiv. 21.) Their charity is languid, for when faith and hope are weak, charity grows cold. They, indeed, retain a love and esteem for Jesus Christ, since they speak of him as a "Prophet, mighty in work and word," (*Luke*, xxiv. 19,) but not as of their Master and their God. They speak of him as strangers, and not as disciples. According to the observation of St. Augustin, they give to the Judge of the prophets the name of his heralds. We learn from these disciples how dangerous it is to quit our spiritual exercises, and practices of devotion, in time of affliction, for it is then we should attach ourselves to God with more generous confidence; for he says: "I am the Lord who gives strength in the day of tribulation. Come to me when it is not well with thee." "This is that which most of all hinders heavenly comfort, that thou art slow in turning thyself to prayer. For before thou earnestly prayest to me, thou seekest in the mean time many comforts. And hence it comes to pass, that all things avail thee little, till thou take notice that I am he who delivers those that trust in me." (*Imitat.* b. iii., c. 30.)

2nd Point. Consider—in the persons of these disciples, the tepidity and impatience of the human heart, which is repelled by the least difficulty that retards its desires. Our Lord had predicted that after three days they should behold him arisen: "A little while, and now you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me." (*John*, xvi. 16.) The term of three days was not long, and nevertheless they await not its termination. They quit the company of the apostles, perhaps never to return, had not the good Pastor led back the wandering sheep. Such is also our impatience in what regards our salvation. Neither labour nor length of years can cool our ardour in the pursuit of things tem-

poral; but in the study of virtue, or acquiring perfection, we are overcome by the least obstacle. Let us endeavour to correct the impatience and impetuous desires so ordinary in the service of God, in prayer, and in the pursuit of virtue. He that confides in God and believes in his word, awaits in peace the fulfilment of his promises. If he delays, wait for him: for he shall surely come, and shall not be slack. The incredulous loses the peace of his soul: the just man, on the contrary, finds in his confidence a source of life. You desire to be perfect in the moment you conceive the design, and immediately to obtain the object of your petition; you commence prayer, and if you succeed not, you quit all and lose courage. This irregularity is a great obstacle to grace: your impatience causes you a great prejudice.

3rd Point. Consider—these words of our Lord addressed to the two disciples: "O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?" (*Luke*, xxiv. 25, 26.) Meditate this admonition of the Saviour, which discovers to us the snares most dangerous to our fidelity and perseverance. First, we are not careful to be sufficiently instructed in the maxims of the Gospel, and therefore we want light to penetrate the profound mystery of the cross. Secondly, we have still less courage to conform our lives to its practice. Do you believe we can enter heaven by any other than the way of the cross; that is to say, by patience, humility mortification, obedience even unto death, and abnegation of self-judgment and will? Do you frequently reflect on these truths? Are you perfectly convinced, touched, and penetrated with their importance? If not, you are "slow of heart to believe." If you believe, why do you fly sufferings, mortification, and humiliation, and bear them with such repugnance when they

occur? Weak and ungenerous of heart! should not your pusillanimity humble and confound you in the presence of God?

My Saviour, who art the wisdom of the Father, and the source of divine love, enlighten my mind and fortify my will; give me a lively faith in thy maxims, and an ardent charity to conform my life to them. Grant that I may sincerely esteem the cross, that I may love and bear it after thee, to the end I may enter with thee into that glory thou hast prepared for thy faithful followers.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus acting the part of the good Pastor towards the two Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—the charitable condescension with which this good Pastor seeks and leads back his wandering sheep. "And it came to pass, that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus himself also drawing near, went with them. But their eyes were held that they should not know him." (*Luke*, xxiv. 15, 16.) Compassionating their weakness, he bears them company, and suits his conversation to the capacity of their minds. Happy disciples, that meet so good a master! He "went with them." In these words is pointed out to us the efficacy of grace, which consists in a secret adaptation and merciful condescension of the spirit of God, which suits itself to the will of man, insinuating itself into the heart, and gaining the consent without constraining his liberty. It is thus this good Pastor governs his flock, accommodating himself to the weakness of his sheep, mingling sweetness with strength in his conduct, and leading all things to their proper end by means equally mild and vigorous.

2nd Point. Consider—the wisdom of this good

Pastor, in the order he observes in seeking his sheep, that is to say, these two disciples, whom he withdraws from their wandering, disposing them by degrees to receive the grace he desires to impart. And he said to them: "What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad?" Thus he draws them to unbosom their grief, that he may console them, and hear them discourse of his sufferings and death. He charitably reproves, to make them enter into themselves and discover their fault. "O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken." (*Luke*, xxiv. 25.) This reproach is an effect, not of anger, but of love. He wounds only to heal. He instructs them, "and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures, the things that were concerning him." (*Luke*, xxiv. 27.) He touches their hearts, and having enlightened their minds, and awakened their faith, he inflames their will, and rekindles the fervor of love; his words are words of charity, which consume our imperfections and defects.

3rd Point. Consider—"And they drew nigh to the town whither they were going: and he made as though he would go farther. But they constrained him, saying: stay with us." (*Luke*, xxiv. 28, 29.) He desires to be detained, even when he seems to withdraw, says St. Bernard. "And it came to pass, whilst he was at table with them, he took bread, and blessed and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him." (*Luke*, xxiv. 30, 31.) O depth of the mercy and goodness of Jesus Christ towards his erring sheep! Ah! what does he not do to lead them back to their duty? He appears under the form of a traveller to these disciples, to draw them back into the ways of God, and teach them the path of the cross. He makes himself all to all, in order to console, instruct, and save them. How often have you experienced the

tenderness of his love? How many salutary admonitions, sweet consolations, and charitable succours has he visited you with? What gratitude and thanksgiving have you returned? What has been your zeal for his glory and the salvation of souls? How have you valued your own, which has been redeemed with his precious blood? What are your efforts for attaining perfection? Ah! if he is so good even when you offend him, what would he be were you more faithful? If he confers on you so many favours in this land of exile, what may you not expect in his heavenly kingdom?

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus appearing to the two Disciples as a Stranger and Pilgrim.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus appears to his disciples, but they know him not "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that hath been done there in these days?" (*Luke.* xxiv. 18.) The Evangelist says, "Their eyes were held that they should not know him." (*Luke*, xxiv. 16.) Our Lord is also with us, as king, pastor, and judge: as king he points out the way by his example; as pastor, he leads and assists us by the succour of his grace; as judge, he examines all our actions, that he may render to each the merited reward or chastisement. How often, through negligence, are we unmindful of the presence of God? Blinded by self-love we know him not as he is, that is to say, as good, just, and liberal as he is, whether he chastise or console, whether he menace or animate us in the pursuit of perfection. The eye of the mind is very weak. In God alone can it find all that it seeks and desires. Happy he whose actions are not swayed by the weight and bias of his vicious

inclinations, but who, on the contrary, regulates them according to the law of right reason! In proportion as he acquires a spirit of recollection and disengagement from every inordinate affection, shall he advance in the knowledge of things spiritual, because he shall receive the gift of understanding, to know God, and that of science, to know himself.

O Father of lights! grant that I may know, and knowing despise myself. Grant that I may know, and knowing love and serve thee.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus appears to his disciples as a pilgrim. He is a pilgrim on earth, where he shews himself but in passing; heaven is the dwelling-place of his glory; he is a pilgrim in the holy Sacrament; for he is there not only as the guide of pilgrims, who pass through time to a blessed eternity, but also as the viaticum in the strength of which they walk to the mount of God. He is on the altar as priest and victim, continuing the sacrifice of the cross, where we may apply to him those words pronounced by Isaiah, when in spirit he beheld him expiring on the cross: "His work is strange to him." (*Isaiah*, xxviii. 21.) To redeem the world, is a work worthy of his infinite greatness; but to expire on a gibbet, suited not his infinite power. Nevertheless, he daily renews this bloody oblation in a mystic and unbloody manner, to apply to us the fruit of salvation, which is the work of his love. We are pilgrims in this land of exile—heaven is the term of our journey. Therefore we should not attach ourselves to that which is terrestrial, for according to St. Paul, "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." (*Heb.* xiii. 14.) We should hold ourselves in thought and affection unceasingly united to Jesus Christ, who is the faithful companion of our journey, our guide to eternity, whose life, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, by its light has dissipated our darkness and destroyed the terrors of death.

3rd Point. Consider—"And he said to them: what are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and are sad?" He proposes this question for their consolation, and your instruction. "The heart of the sage, which relishes divine things, shall supply words to his lips, and teach him to speak of God." (*Prov.*) If the Son of God drawing near during your conversations, inquire what are these discourses that you hold, should you not blush at your railleries, contentions, the levity, impetuosity, and indiscretion of your words? Are these the discourses you held in the time of your fervor? Are they such as you purposed in the time of retreat, prayer, and communion? Is your conversation that of a Christian, a religious, a man of heaven, who aspires after sanctity, a servant of Jesus Christ, whose tongue has been purpled with the blood of his Redeemer? At the judgment-seat of God, what will be your reply when an account shall be demanded of every idle word you have uttered? Then your words will either justify or condemn you. Think well on this, and henceforth take care frequently to speak of Jesus Christ, and with recollection of his divine presence.

O Jesus, grant that the odour of thy name may be always in my heart and lips—that the language of this world may become to me a strange and unknown language, and that all conversation which is not ultimately directed to thy glory, may become insipid and unmeaning to me.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus instructing the Disciples in the mystery of the Cross.

1st Point. Consider—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?" (*Luke*, xxiv. 26.) The glory our Lord merited by his

death is displayed in his resurrection from the tomb, and his triumphant ascension—in the knowledge of his divinity, spread throughout the earth by the merits of his passion—in the exaltation of his sacred humanity, elevated above the choirs of angels, who prostrate in adoration acknowledge him as King of glory—in the conversion of the Gentiles, the establishment of his Church, and the regeneration of the world, of which his death is the meritorious cause. The Lord shall build up Sion, and he shall be seen in his glory, (*Ps* ci. 17,) that is to say, according to St. Chrysostom, when the Lord shall have restored his kingdom, and founded his Church on the cross, he shall arise and be seen in his glory, that is, in the glorious marks of his sufferings. "Then he saith to Thomas: put in thy finger hither, and see my hands.....Thomas answering: my Lord and my God." (*John*, xx. 27, 28.) Do you also adore with profound respect the body of Jesus, veiled in the Sacrament, saying to him with David: "Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion: for it is time to have mercy on it, for the time is come. And the Gentiles shall fear thy name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory." (*Ps.* ci.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" Although the passion of the Son of God was not absolutely necessary for remitting our sins and healing our wounds, nevertheless, it was a remedy the most suitable to the extremity of our evils, and the excess of his love. Yet we may say, that in order worthily to satisfy the rigour of divine justice, there was no other remedy. "For the general ruin of human nature," says St. Leo, "there was but one remedy in the sacred council of eternal wisdom, by which to restore fallen man, which was, that one, exempt from crime, should be born of the race of Adam, that he might succour his brethren by his example and merits." When an occasion of suffering occurs, let the

remembrance of that infinite mercy with which the Son of God delivered himself to death for your salvation, animate your courage and zeal. Say to yourself, God demands this sacrifice. It is written: "the kingdom of God suffers violence." "If any one will come after me, let him take up his cross." Unless I do violence to myself, I can never subdue my passions and vices, or acquire any solid virtue. "Salvation is in the cross." (*Imitat.* b. ii., c. 12) "The chalice that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (*John*, xvii. 11.)

3rd Point. Consider—in order to understand the union between glory and the cross, life and death, suffering and enjoyment, reflect on the double necessity of the end and the means. We must secure our salvation, whatever it may cost: this is the necessity of the end. In order to be saved, we must suffer: this is the necessary means—both are indispensable. The Son of God, who was innocent, was not exempt from suffering: how shall the sinner be dispensed therefrom? If the master must suffer to enter into his glory, shall not the servant suffer to enter into the glory of his master? Jesus Christ has suffered death and is resuscitated, demonstrating by his passion what we must suffer in time, and by his resurrection, what we may hope in eternity. Suffer as he has suffered, and hope to participate in his glory. He has suffered poverty, contempt, torments, and death. Can you enter heaven by another way? This would be an illusion; heaven was his birth-right, and nevertheless he entered it only by the cross; and shall we, who expect it only through his merits, possess it without labour or pain. Such would be a signal folly. Imitate then the spouse, and place Jesus crucified, with his sufferings and opprobrium, as "a bundle of myrrh" on your heart, that you may never be unmindful of the price paid for your redemption.

FRIDAY.

On the Disciples entreating the Son of God to remain with them.

1st Point. Consider—"But they constrained him saying: Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent." (*Luke*, xxiv. 29.) We should also address this prayer to Jesus Christ, when he permits that dereliction so ordinary to persons who aim at perfection. For sometimes it seems as if God had forgotten them, being left without light or sentiment of piety in their spiritual exercises. Again, he seems as if deaf to their prayers, or as if holding the rod of anger over them. Sometimes he presents them with a heavy cross, in order to prove their courage. In all these conjunctures we should say with the disciples, "stay with us," lest under this privation our heart should seek consolation from creatures. It is not hard to despise all human comfort when we have divine; but it is much, very much, to be able to want all comfort, both human and divine; and to be willing to bear this interior banishment for God's honour, and to seek one's-self in nothing, nor to think of one's own merit. What great thing is it to be cheerful and devout when grace comes. This hour is desirable to all. His path is easy and agreeable, who is led by the grace of the Omnipotent. And what wonder if he feel no weight, who is carried by the Almighty and conducted by the sovereign guide?

2nd Point. Consider—"They said one to another: Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the way, and opened to us the scriptures?" (*Luke*, xxiv. 32.) These celestial visitations are transitory: we cannot enjoy them when we will, for they are the gratuitous gifts of God, which are conferred or withdrawn according to his pleasure. Let us cultivate

assiduously a holy liberty of spirit, that will enable us to proceed with equanimity in the divine service, whether we are proved by dereliction or favoured with sensible devotion. This liberty of spirit can only proceed from a perfect detachment from all things; general renunciation of one's-self; continual mortification of the senses, mind, and heart; great purity of intention; a serious examination of our words, actions, thoughts, and desires, in the presence of God. In whatever state we may be, we should always say with the disciples Lord, "stay with us." Abandoned by thee, we are weakness itself; but if thou lookest upon us, we are filled with joy.

Blessed be thou, O my God, for though I am unworthy of all good, yet thy generosity and infinite goodness never ceaseth to do good, even to those who are ungrateful, and that are turned away from thee. O convert us unto thee, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout; for thou art our salvation, our power, and our strength.

3rd Point. Consider—"Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is far spent." Our life, according to the language of scripture, is but a day. It is true there is no hour of the day, nor part of our life exempt from temptation; consequently we must incessantly cry to our Lord: "stay with us." Nevertheless we are never more in danger than in the decline of the day, that is to say, at the approach of death, because, as St. Bernard says, the devil spreads his most dangerous snares to oppose our perseverance, knowing that this virtue alone bears away the crown. Then with redoubled ardour should we call upon our Lord to "stay with us," because "it is towards evening, and the day is far spent," particularly as we shall have less strength to resist our enemies, who will renew all their efforts in this last combat, knowing that it will decide the victory.

O my God, remove not from me; my God, abandon

me not in the hour of my distress; O Lord my God, in thy protection I place my confidence; under the shadow of thy wings I shall rest secure. From the days of infancy thou hast preserved me, and according to thy promise thou wilt not forsake me in the end; relying on thee, we are invincible; when confiding in ourselves, our strength is weakness.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus discovering himself to the Disciples in the breaking of bread.

1st Point. Consider—"And he went in with them. And it came to pass, whilst he was at table with them, he took bread, and blessed and brake and gave to them." (*Luke*, xxiv. 30.) Thus he acts with us in communion, prayer, and all our actions. For as without him we can do nothing, we stand in need of his concurrence and assistance on every occasion. His charity is never wanting to us, but all do not equally avail themselves of his grace. Some revere his presence, value his favours, and co-operate with fidelity; others reflect not on his benefits, and place obstacles to the good designed for them. To which class do you belong? Are you careful to walk in his presence? Does he accompany you in your labour and in your repose? Can you say with the wise man: Entering into my house, I will converse with the Incarnate Wisdom; this is my consolation and my joy, for his conversation has no bitterness; on the contrary, it is infinitely sweet and agreeable? Or with Job: Who will grant me, that God may listen to my desires, and that he who is to judge me may direct all my actions, that he would write them in a book, to the end I may bear it on my shoulders as a rich ornament, or that placing it on my

head it may serve me as a crown? Wherever I go I will read it, and at every step I will offer it to him as my king.

2nd Point. Consider—"They knew him in the breaking of bread." The holy scripture gives a threefold signification of the breaking of bread, which contains three excellent means of increasing in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. First, it signifies the exercise of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. "Deal thy bread," says Isaiah, "to the hungry." (*Isaiah*, lxvii. 7.) Our Lord discovers himself to his disciples in the breaking of bread. Learn where you must seek, find, and know Jesus Christ: in the breaking of bread you shall know the Lord. Secondly, it signifies the word of God, which is distributed to the children of the church. Do you desire to increase in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ? Imitate these disciples, who listened with a holy avidity to the words of our Lord, whilst he discovered to them the mysteries of the cross. Thirdly, it signifies the holy communion. There the truly fervent discover our Lord in the breaking of bread; and perceive, like the two disciples, that Jesus walks with them, because their hearts are glowing and replenished with his love. Hungering and thirsting after this fountain of living water, they receive the sacred body of Jesus Christ with a spiritual avidity and inconceivable delight. Alas! how far removed am I from such lively sentiments of devotion and love.

Grant, O Lord, that in participating of this holy sacrament, my faith may be enlivened, my hope fortified, and my charity enkindled into a flame that shall never be extinguished.

3rd Point. Consider—"And rising up the same hour they went to Jerusalem." (*Luke*, xxiv. 33.) From these disciples we learn, promptly to execute the good desires which our Lord inspires, either for the correction of our defects, or the acquisition of virtues. Observe also the remarkable effects of the visits of Jesus

Christ. The fruit is a holy ardour and disposition to virtue. "In my meditation a fire shall flame out." (*Ps.* xxxvii. 4.) Are your meditations animated by fervour? Do you mingle affections and elevations of the heart with the discourse of the understanding? "My soul hath fainted after thy salvation, and in thy word I have very much hoped." (*Ps.* xxxviii. 81.) The second is a prompt fulfilment of the good desires you have formed: "I will understand in the unspotted way, when thou shalt come to me. I walked in the innocence of my heart, in the midst of my house. I did not set before my eyes any unjust thing: I hated the works of iniquity." (*Ps.* c. 2, 3.) When in prayer and holy communion you conceive strong desires of mortifying and humbling yourself, of suffering with patience, or exercising charity, are you careful to embrace the first occasion of reducing them to practice? Do you not permit this holy ardour to grow cold? Have you not resolved to be more attentive to the divine presence? Whence then comes this dissipation of mind, this forgetfulness of God, and loss of time? Implore pardon. Say with David: "Let thy mercy also come upon me, O Lord: thy salvation according to thy word. Be thou mindful of thy word to thy servant, in which thou hast given me hope. This hath comforted me in my humiliation, because thy word hath enlivened me. The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy, teach me thy justification." (*Ps.* cxviii.)

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On Jesus appearing to the Apostles on the day of his Resurrection.

1st Point. Consider—"The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord." (*John*, xx. 20.) Jesus

manifesting himself to his apostles and replenishing them with joy, on the same day of his resurrection, fully accomplishes all he had promised on the eve of his sacred passion. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." (*John*, xvi. 22.) This life is but a moment of joy and of sorrow, in which the just and sinner, though differently, partake. The portion of the wicked is a momentary joy, and an eternal sorrow; that of the just, a moment of sadness, and an everlasting joy. The wicked rejoice in honours, riches, and pleasures; but that which they love ends in vanity, illusion, and falsehood. Such is the blindness of sinners who are so borne along by their passions as to purchase the transitory delights of this miserable life at the price of their immortal souls. But thou, Christian soul, suffer not thy passions to domineer; renounce thy irregular desires; close thy heart to these fatal pleasures, and for this purpose make use of the mortification of the senses, the fear of God, and the love of Jesus Christ. How can those eyes, created to contemplate Jesus Christ, the source of true pleasure, rest upon the things of this world? O fleeting joys of this life, at what a price you are purchased by sinners! Their pleasure is but momentary; and that moment is followed by an eternity of wo.

2nd Point. Consider—a momentary sorrow and an eternal joy are the portion of the just. "You shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (*John*, xvi. 20.) Fear not to open your heart to that compunction which the Holy Ghost inspires. Such sadness is more desirable than all the joys of worldlings. God exercises those whom he loves during this life, and a trial of their virtue seems at present rather a subject of sorrow than joy; but afterwards they shall gather in peace the fruit of justice. Sanctity produces a threefold fruit. During life the joy of the just proceeds from the testimony of a good conscience. At the

hour of death, they rejoice in quitting this corruptible life. After death they enter into the joy of their Lord, where they shall rest securely for ever. Truly therefore the joy of the just is continual, because God, who is an infinite good, is its source, including all that can render them happy; an immortal and unfailing good, of which they can never be deprived. Blessed are they whose inheritance is the Lord, and who can say with his saints: "My God and my all! O savoury and sweet word! but to him that loves the *Word*, not the world, nor the things that are in the world. He that has a relish of thee will find all things savoury. And to him that relishes thee not, what can ever yield any true delight." (*Imit.* b. iii. 34.)

3rd POINT. Consider—that even in this life Jesus Christ changes our afflictions into joy, in the most holy sacrament, where he consoles us by his presence, entering our souls, "the doors being shut"—that is to say, our senses being guarded, and our hearts closed to all terrestrial objects. There he makes us taste of his sweetness, after which all the pleasures of the world become insipid or bitter. There, says St. Augustin, he makes us drink of the water of life, that flows from the fountain of paradise, which extinguishes all thirst after worldly contentments. In fine, there he nourishes us with the bread of angels, the delight of kings—that is to say, of the just, who reign over their passions. In this our Lord treats the elect with his wonted mercy, withdrawing earthly gratifications, lest they become attached thereto, and imparting divine consolations, to attract and convince them, by a happy experience, that he is the God of all consolation, in whom alone their beatitude consists, and who, instead of all created good, will himself be their only and everlasting inheritance.

O! when will this blessed and desirable hour come, when thou shalt fill me with thy presence, and become

to me all in all? As long as this is not granted me my joy will not be full, for there is no hope nor refuge for me but in thee, O Lord, my God.

MONDAY.

On Jesus saying to his Apostles: Peace be to you.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus stood in the midst of them, and saith to them: Peace be to you; it is I, fear not." (*Luke*, xxiv. 36.) Peace is the fruit of charity; for in loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, and all our strength, our sensitive appetites are reduced to obedience and repose. In loving our neighbour as ourselves, our will becomes one with his, by a unity of choice, according to the moral maxim, that the mutual affection of friends produces such perfect accordance, as of two wills to make but one. In fine, charity, by regulating self-love, calms the passions, and by repressing the causes of intestine warfare, establishes the soul in peace. This peace, according to St. Thomas, is the immediate effect, not of habitual, but of actual charity, which is the governing principle of the heart, and employs all the faculties in the acquisition of that good in which it centres its happiness. Thence Cajitan says, that the character of charity is, to unite all our powers and senses in a single good, which is God.

2nd Point. Consider—peace is the fruit of actual charity, accompanied by the other virtues necessary for its preservation. Those are, especially, humility, which prevents the sadness and disquietude ordinarily springing from concealed pride, subtle ambition, or secret self-esteem; patience, by which we meekly support the miseries and vexations of this life; and conformity to the divine will, the most powerful defence against

every evil, and a universal means for appeasing every trouble. These troubles usually arise from our opposition to the divine appointments. We are placed in an office or situation that accords not with our inclinations, or we are required to act in opposition to our own judgment or will. Such are the occurrences that frequently disturb our peace. If you desire to enjoy a profound calm, obey willingly, for the difficulty consists not in the command, but in the repugnance of our own will. Follow in all things the counsel of St. Paul. Being justified by faith, let us have peace with God. What is it to have peace with God, says St. Augustin, but to will what he commands, and not to will what he prohibits. How is it possible to have peace with God, if we take pleasure in what displeases him, or seek our satisfaction in what is contrary to his law?

3rd Point. Consider—the excellence of peace in its effects. According to St. Thomas it appeases those vague desires which are the principal enemies of our repose. Peace arrests the violence and impetuosity of these irregular movements that agitate the heart. It shields us from those exterior troubles by which we are surrounded; for he who is in possession of a sovereign good makes no account of external objects. Hence conclude, that peace being, next to the grace of God, the best gift we can possess in this life, we can never sufficiently love and honour the Son of God, through whom this heavenly benefit has been imparted. As the demon strives, by every wile, to rob us of this treasure, let all our care be employed in its preservation. For this end, watch over your interior, lest anything warp or embitter your mind. Cultivate a great purity of heart, which produces peace, by removing every impediment to a union of the soul with God, the centre of its repose. Make frequent acts of divine love, of adoration, and entire abandonment of yourself to the tender providence of God. Often cast your interior

eyes on the Son of God, that your actions may be animated by his spirit. Ask yourself, what would he say, what would he do, how would he act on such an occasion?

Grant, O Lord, to thy unworthy servant, *that peace which the world cannot give*, but which thou hast purchased for me by thy sorrows, thy ignominy, and thy pains. I know that, during this mortal life, peace can only be found in patiently enduring the trials and sufferings incident to our exiled state. Give me then, my God, that meek and humble heart wherein alone thy peace dwelleth here below; whilst I hope hereafter to possess its plenitude in that eternal abode where, with David, "I shall be fully satisfied when thy glory shall appear."

TUESDAY.

On the wounds of Jesus in his glorified body.

1st Point. Consider—"He showed them his hands and his side." (*John*, xx. 20.) After having adored those sacred wounds, learn from your divine Master the inevitable necessity all lie under of suffering during this mortal life. Ascend the hill of Calvary, and behold the God-man, the just man, and the sinner, attached to the cross. The bad thief represents the sinner, who is not exempt from suffering. The just man also must bear the cross, for thus God proves and perfects his virtue. Is the Man-God exempt from this penalty? Look upon his hands and feet! He is truly "a man of sorrows," whose cross alone is heavier than the united sufferings of the just and the sinner. Contemplate his adorable body bathed in a bloody sweat in the garden of Olives, torn with stripes at the pillar,

covered with wounds on the cross, to teach us, according to the holy Fathers, that each of the faithful, who constitute his mystic body, must be marked with this cross, by participating in his sufferings. If you are a member of the body of Christ, you must suffer, either as his feet, with Magdalen, by the practice of penance; or as his hands, like Martha, by the exercise of good works, or united to his sacred heart, with St. John, by the fervour of charity. The sinner, the just, the perfect, all must suffer. You cannot fly the cross; embrace it, therefore, generously, and like your Lord and Master, bear it devotedly unto death.

2nd Point. Consider—that nothing can be more honourable, sweet, or advantageous to a Christian soul, than to suffer in the service of God. Nothing more honourable, because Jesus Christ has, if we may use the expression, deified sufferings, and rendered them adorable in his own divine person. By his wounds he has merited the glory that robes his sacred body, the triumph of his resurrection, his glorious ascension into heaven, where he is seated at the right hand of his Father, and his quality of sovereign Judge of the living and the dead. In fine, we may say it is the cross that has glorified Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ has glorified the cross; and it is also the cross that has glorified all the saints. Nothing more sweet, because Jesus Christ, the increated wisdom, whose property is to sweeten all that is united to him, having taken upon himself our sufferings, has communicated to them the sweetness of his divine wisdom. Thence it follows, that poverty, chastity, obedience, pardon of injuries, and the other evangelical virtues heretofore so difficult to practise, now seem easy and delightful to souls united by charity to the Son of God, who is their example and their strength. Nothing more advantageous, because in the wounds of Jesus Christ are found the graces necessary for attaining salvation; and these graces are applied to

the soul by those sufferings with which you are favoured during your earthly pilgrimage.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ retains the wounds on his glorified body, as a refuge for his children in all their necessities. Are you importuned by temptation?—does the world and the flesh solicit, or the devil lay snares to surprise you? Enter with the Spouse into the "clifts of the rock, the hollow places of the wall" (*Cant.* ii. 14)—the sacred wounds of Christ—there you can repose secure from every danger. Does remorse for past sins afflict your conscience? Cast yourself, with the penitent Magdalen, at your Saviour's feet—they had not yet been pierced when she there found pardon; now the stream of mercy flowing from their wounds will infallibly cleanse you from every stain. If the dark cloud of despair hover over you, "go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the face of the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of his Majesty, when he shall rise up to strike the earth." (*Isaiah*, ii. 19). The sacred heart of Jesus is the source of mercy, and his wounds are the channels through which it flows. Whatever terror may assail you, quit not this "fountain," for the word of your Saviour is pledged, that he will not reject those who take refuge in his mercy. Do you labour for the acquisition of virtues? Have recourse to the hands of the Son of God. In fine, are you advanced towards perfection? Enter the wound of the heart, and be nourished with the hidden manna, that excites a hunger and thirst for poverty, pain, and opprobrium.

How, O Lord, can a heart so impure as mine presume to enter the wound of thy sacred side? Alas! the voice of my criminal conscience still holds me at thy feet, where I sigh after thy love, and await the happy moment when thou shalt call me to thyself.

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus giving power to his Apostles to remit sin.

1st Point. Consider—"He breathed on them, and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (*John*, xx. 22, 23.) Jesus Christ imparts the Holy Ghost to his Apostles, because the remission of sins is a work of charity which is attributed to the Holy Ghost, as the works of wisdom are to the Divine Word, and those of power to the Eternal Father. He chooses the day of his resurrection, which is a day of joy, for establishing the sacrament of penance, because the conversion of a sinner rejoices heaven and earth, and the moral resurrection of such a one is truly a paschal day, on which he passes from spiritual death to life, from sin to grace. If it is a subject of great joy to be healed of a dangerous malady—to arrive safe in port after a dreadful tempest—to recover what was lost—to find a treasure, or regain the favour of one who will confer upon us every benefit, and repair every loss—should not the sinner approach the tribunal of penance with the liveliest sentiments of gratitude and joy, since there he finds a remedy for all his spiritual evils, a port of salvation after shipwreck, the life of the soul, the treasure of grace, which restores him to the favour of God, enriches him with the gifts of heaven, revives the merit of past works, and re-establishes him, with an increase of glory, in all the rights enjoyed before his disgrace, even to the heavenly inheritance?

2nd Point. Consider those words: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven." Admire the liberality of Jesus Christ, who communicates to man so marvellous a power; for what can exceed the power of remitting sin? Nevertheless, behold with what facility he imparts it, for two words suffice: "I absolve

thee." With what ineffable sweetness does he bestow it, for no other defence or justification is required than the penitent confession of sin, in order to receive absolution, and with it the exchange of eternal punishment into a light and temporary atonement! There is no sin, however grievous and multiplied, that cannot be remitted in the sacrament of penance. How blinded, then, the sinner whom a false shame withholds from this tribunal, established in his behalf by infinite mercy. Let him, rather, approach with penitential love and filial confidence "to the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (*Heb.* iv. 16.) With what charity should the sinner be received by those who hold the place of so meek and merciful a judge! With what alacrity, solicitude, and patience should they attend and minister to his spiritual necessities! In this tribunal they act, not as mortal man, but as invested with the power of God himself, to whom they must render a tremendous account of the discharge of a ministry exalted above that of angels.

3rd Point. Consider—"He breathed on them, and he said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (*John*, xx. 22.) Thus he confirms them in the faith of his resurrection, and in the hope of their own resuscitation to a glorious immortality on the day of final retribution, when his omnipotent command shall call forth the inhabitants of the grave. Reflect on the care with which our Lord assures the disciples of the certainty of this mystery, proving it to all their senses, appearing in the midst of them, saluting and familiarly conversing with them, eating of the food they had prepared, breathing on them, and inviting them to touch his sacred wounds. It is thus you should prove your spiritual resurrection: appearing in those places where charity, devotion, and humility are exercised; celebrating the praises of God, holding pious discourse,

consoling the afflicted, giving good counsel, reproving vice with discreet zeal, and leading others to the practice of virtue; patiently enduring pain or inconvenience, and afflicting your body with wholesome austerity; retrenching every indulgence of the taste. In fine, by spreading around the odour of good example, so that you may say with the apostle: We are the good odour of Jesus Christ.

THURSDAY.

On the goodness of Jesus Christ to his incredulous Disciple.

1st Point. Consider—"And after eight days again his disciples were within and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said: Peace be to you. Then he said to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." (*John*, xx. 26, 27.) The incredulity of this apostle is without excuse: he neither believed the prediction of his divine Master, nor the testimony of St. Peter, who had seen him after his resurrection. His presumption was extreme, for he preferred his own judgment to that of all the apostles, whom he accused of simplicity. He is ungrateful to his Lord and Master for the graces received, and the dignity to which he had been elevated. He has the temerity to prescribe laws to his sovereign and his God; and were he not wanting in reverence and respect, the very thought of putting his hand in the sacred wounds of his Saviour would cause him to tremble with awe. Nevertheless, Jesus supports with inconceivable meekness the infidelity of his disciple, and prepares a sovereign remedy for his incredulity, and the fortifying of our faith. Enter into yourself, and consider whether

any of these defects reign in your heart. Shun especially all attachment to your own judgment. Yield willingly to the opinion of others. Although yours may be good, to adhere to it when occasion or reason demands the contrary, is always the mark of a proud and obstinate mind.

2nd Point. Consider—the unparalleled charity with which Jesus withdraws St. Thomas from his infidelity. Should not the servant seek the master, the sick person the physician, and the disciple his Lord? Yet this the divine Saviour prevents, and is the first to seek this faithless disciple. "He enters, the doors being shut." His custom is to knock at the door of the heart, and await its opening. "I stand at the door and knock; if any man open to me I will enter." But here he performs a miracle. "He enters, the doors being shut." To heal the incredulity of his disciple, he displays an act of that omnipotence, which all creatures unresistingly obey. He shews him his wounds. "Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side." St. Thomas knew not that his Lord and his God was present when he said: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." (*John*, xx. 25.) Now he discovers that nothing can be concealed from the infinite wisdom of his Master, who, with a charity commensurate with that wisdom, sweetly invites the disciple to touch those sacred wounds, whence issues the light of faith to illuminate, as previously rushed the blood to redeem, the human race.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus re-establishes St. Thomas to the state from which he had fallen, and restores with advantage what he had lost by incredulity. He had failed in his faith, and was consequently deprived of the supernatural virtues founded thereon. In the wounds of his Master all his losses are repaired, and he

can say with the royal prophet: "I sought God with my hands lifted up .....and I was not deceived." (*Ps.* lxxvi. 8.) In the absence of St. Thomas, the Son of God had imparted his peace to the disciples, established them pastors of his Church, ministers of his sacred word, and committed to them the dispensation of his divine mysteries. Shall this apostle be deprived of a share in those favours? Shall the church lose so zealous a pastor, the vineyard of the Lord so excellent a labourer? No, the heart of Jesus is no longer "a fountain sealed up;" it is now opened, and from his pierced hands flow abundantly the treasures of grace. There Thomas receives his mission, his authority, with the peace and gifts of the Holy Ghost, who makes of him a faithful witness and confessor of the resurrection of our Lord.

O salutary and saving wounds, giving life to the dead, health to the sick, sight to the blind! precious fountains of grace, beloved source of faith in the resurrection and divinity of Jesus Christ! Happy he whose thoughts, affections, and desires centre in the opened heart of Jesus, and who draws the light of faith, and the fire of charity, from the flame with which it burns.

FRIDAY.

On the holy affections of St. Thomas on seeing his Master.

1st Point. Consider—those words of the apostle, "My Lord and my God." (*John*, xx. 28.) It is the confession of his faith, which former incredulity renders more ardent. He is the first who declares the union of the divine and human nature in Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah describes the apostles thus: "Who are these, that fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows?" (*Isaiah*, lx. 8.) The Son of God requires them to combine the prudence of the serpent with the sim-

plicity of the dove. Thomas had held a distinguished place among those doves; but he had forgotten the precept of his Master. In desiring to appear more wise than others, he lost his simplicity. This was the cause of an error which had nearly drawn him into the snares of the demon; until happily finding a refuge in the wounds of Jesus Christ, he retires for safety into the "clefts of the rock," where he may weep in secret, deploring his fault, in the sorrow and confusion of his heart, imploring pardon for his ingratitude to his Lord and Saviour. Behold the dove in the "clefts of the rock." In these precious wounds he is saved from the pursuit of the vulture, that flies around the rock that he dares not approach.

2nd Point. Consider—again those words: "My Lord and my God." It is the out-pouring of joy and love from a heart that has recovered its lost treasure. The charity of the apostle is rekindled in touching the sacred wounds of his divine Master, whence as from a glowing furnace is emitted that celestial fire which had inflamed the heart of St. Thomas, when before the passion of his Saviour, he said, "Let us go and die with him." St. John compares the apostles to a crown of twelve stars, which are the light and ornament of the Church. The dragon endeavours to cast down a third of those stars, amongst whom Thomas was one of the most brilliant. But the Son of God sustains his elect. "When he shall fall he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth his hand under him." (*Ps.* xxxvi. 24.) He saves him from the dangers of the abyss into which he had fallen, by showing his hands and his side, the view of which supports and raises him up, even to that admirable confession of the divinity: My Lord and my God. O what joy to this apostle! With what ardent gratitude is his soul replenished for so singular a benefit! Happy saint! how great the favour, to put your hand into that heart of mercy, that side, the source of

salvation, in which we are saved from the wrath of God, find healing for all our spiritual maladies, are engendered to grace, and elevated to eternal glory.

3rd Point. Consider—with what sentiments you should pronounce those words, "My Lord and my God." When you visit the most holy sacrament, or receive the bread of life, pronounce them with a lively faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ, and tender gratitude for the grace therein conferred. "My Lord and my God," I believe that thou art here present, though hidden under the sacramental veil; I renounce my own judgment and the testimony of my senses. "Thou art my God and my Saviour, I have expected thee during the day.' Pronounce them in a spirit of compunction and humility, with a profound sorrow and confusion for your sins. "My Lord and my God," alas! what have I done? I have sinned against thee, "my Lord and my God," I am unworthy to approach thee. O divine Lamb, that takest away the sins of the world, I conjure thee by these sacred wounds, the only refuge of the sinner, to grant me mercy. Pronounce them with a sentiment of love and holy joy. "Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion; for great is he that is in the midst of thee, the holy One of Israel" Approach and "draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." Say with confidence: "Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear, because the Lord is my strength and my praise, and he is become my salvation." (*Isaiah*, xii.)

"My Lord and my God." O words breathing sweetness to the heart that loves the Eternal Word, and "not the world nor the things which are in the world." (*John*, ii. 15.) These are words understood only by him that loves, and he repeats them with increasing ardour. May I repeat them during my life, at the hour of death, and in the unfading glory of eternity. "My Lord and my God," dart forth from thy sacred

wounds a ray of light and love, to penetrate and transpierce my heart even to its inmost recesses. Enlighten my mind, inflame my will, that all the powers and affections of my soul may be consecrated with an eternal devotion to thee, "my Lord and my God."

SATURDAY.

Jesus recommends Faith to his Apostles.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus saith: Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed." (*John*, xx. 29.) Faith is a virtue that has subdued the whole world to the Son of God; it is the key that has opened to him those hearts that the enemy had possessed. It maintains the kingdom of Jesus Christ against all the fury of the demons and the rebellion of corrupt nature. Under the standard of faith all the virtues rally to combat their enemies. Faith inspires the just man to prefer the service of God to his own interests, and to despise himself for the love of his Creator. "Moses," says St. Paul, "by faith, chose rather to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time—esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians; for he looked unto the reward." In this sense the same Apostle says, "that the saints, by faith, conquered kingdoms," (*Heb.* xi.,) in despising them. They overcame tyrants, by suffering their violence, and by contemning alike their threats and promises. Cultivate, therefore, this virtue with assiduous care, since "without faith it is impossible to please God." (*Heb.* xi. 6.) It is the virtue of great souls, whose desires extend beyond the visible world.

2nd Point. Consider—faith is a virtue that confers beatitude even in this life. St. Thomas says, it is a participation of the light of glory, imparting knowledge, love, joy, and sanctity, the principal prerogatives of a beatified soul. The knowledge faith gives of divine things far exceeds all human science. It discovers what is unknown, attains what is inaccessible, comprehends what is immense, penetrates even to the end of ages, and, in fine, encloses within its bosom the vast expanse of eternity. Charity cannot subsist without faith, because this virtue discovers the perfections of God, and leads us to his love as its ultimate end. The joy imparted by faith is of inestimable value. "Believing," says the prince of the Apostles, "you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (*Peter*, i. 8, 9.) Where faith is, there is repose, tranquillity, and a salutary remedy for every evil. In fine, without faith there is no true sanctity. We are subject to God by faith, we draw nigh to him by hope, and we are united to him by charity. Without faith there is nothing holy, nothing pure, nothing indicative of spiritual life. "The just man liveth by faith." (*Ibid.*)

3rd Point. Consider—faith is a virtue that enlightens our darkness, and leads us securely through the shadows of death unto the light of life eternal. Meditate those words of Jesus Christ—"Blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed." Faith closes our eyes to all that falls under the senses, whilst it discovers to us that which transcends human reason. It teaches us that visible things are transitory, but that the invisible endure for eternity. Those deceive and amuse: therefore happy he who holds them in contempt. These are of infinite price: consequently he who understands their value, and constantly bears them in mind, is blessed. God imparts the gift of faith to all

within the pale of his church, but how few act under the influence of its spirit! How few meditate on eternity! How few seek God in the sincerity of their hearts! Fly, Christian soul, this fatal blindness. Accustom yourself to contemplate in this bright mirror the past, the present, and the future. Ascend by the light of this torch to the heavenly city, saying: My soul, behold the place of thy eternal habitation; let us hold ourselves in preparation, lest we be surprised by death. Descend then, in spirit, to the place of eternal torments prepared for the sinner, that you may hereafter escape it through the mercy of God. Therefore fear to displease his justice, lest you be unworthy that mercy. Frequently place yourself in the presence of God; remember his eye is upon you, although you behold him not. When you shall behold him in the unveiled splendour of his glory, it shall no longer be said to you: believe in that which you see not, but rather rejoice in beholding that in which you have believed.

FOURTH SUNDAY.

On Jesus promising the Holy Ghost to his Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—"It is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go I will send him to you." (*John*, xvi. 7.) The death of Jesus Christ is the meritorious cause of all the gifts of heaven, consequently of the mission of the Divine Spirit, the gift of God by excellence. O infinite mercy of God, that imparts to us a gift equal to himself! What gratitude should we render for all the spiritual favours contained in this treasure? When you are inspired with some pious thought, holy affection, or when you receive light to aid you in

the practice of good works, or to overcome evil customs, it is the Holy Ghost that visits you, and he comes through the merits of Jesus Christ. This visit is a fruit of his death, the price of his blood, the recompense of his labours and sufferings, especially applied to you, in preference to many others whom he regards with a less favourable eye. How should you esteem this grace?—with what fidelity should you correspond to it? Beware of rendering it unprofitable. Offend not the Divine Spirit, who dispenses, or the Son of God, who purchased it by his death on the cross.

2nd Point. Consider—the Apostles were so tenderly attached to their divine Master, they could not endure his absence, nor even think of his departure without extreme sorrow. Could their attachment to Jesus Christ, or their grief for his absence, render them incapable of receiving the Holy Ghost? Although nothing can be more holy than the love of this divine Saviour, yet that which the Apostles bore him was not sufficiently spiritual or disengaged from the senses; it was too human, too much mingled with self-love. Theirs was a love of tenderness, but it was not, as St. Paul says, "according to knowledge;" therefore they could not relish the fruits of the Divine Spirit. Hence our Lord said to them: "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you." Unless you cease to behold me with your corporal eyes, you cannot learn to love me with a spiritual love. Who should not fear to indulge an attachment to creatures, since that of the Apostles to the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ was an obstacle to their receiving the Holy Ghost. However trivial the inordinate affection may be, the evil it inflicts on the soul is of no small moment. It deprives us of peace, and "whensoever a man desires anything inordinately, he is presently disquieted within himself." (*Imitat.* b. i., c. 6.) It is an impediment to our strict union with God, because, according to St. Chrysostom, you re-

trench from the Creator the affection bestowed on the creature. In fine, it retards our entrance into beatitude, and condemns the soul to suffer in purgatory, proportionably to the attachments indulged during life. Can it be a small evil that deprives us of so great a good?

3rd Point. Consider—it was "expedient" that Jesus Christ should quit the earth, and ascend to the throne of his glory, before the coming down of the Holy Ghost, because the Divine Spirit came on earth to publish the glory of Jesus Christ, and to manifest all the mysteries of his life, amongst which his ascension, and exaltation at the right hand of his eternal Father, hold an important place. Therefore Jesus Christ must ascend to heaven, before the Holy Ghost descends on earth to accomplish this design. Moreover, the Son of God desires to form a marvellous intercourse between heaven and earth. For this effect he elevates his sacred body to heaven, that his divine spirit may descend on earth, and by this means establish between the celestial and terrestrial worlds an intimate communication. In fine, he had said—"And I, when I am raised up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." For the accomplishment of this prediction, "it is expedient" that he ascend to the highest heaven, to the end he may attract all hearts thither; and this attraction he operates through the spirit of love, who comes to enkindle in the hearts of all the love of God, and of his only Son, Jesus Christ.

Come, Holy Ghost, replenish the hearts of the faithful, and enkindle therein the fire of thy divine love. Adorable wounds of my Saviour, through which the peace and consolations of this divine spirit are imparted to man, through thee we glorify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. May all creatures unite in glorifying the adorable Trinity, through the sacred wounds and precious blood of Jesus Christ, for ever and ever. Amen.

MONDAY.

On Jesus appearing to the Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

1st Point. Consider—"And that night they caught nothing." (*John*, xxi. 3.) Those labour in the darkness of night who are in the state of sin; for sin is a fatal night, which deprives us of the light of sanctifying grace, without which we can do nothing meritorious of eternal felicity. Those labour in the night, who, in their actions, seek themselves rather than the glory of God or their own sanctification. Their sinister intention is an obscure night, that renders their actions darksome, according to that of our Lord in the Gospel: "The light of the body is the eye. If the eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome: but if the eye be evil, thy body also will be darksome." (*Luke*, xi. 34.) Again, those labour in the night, who confide in their industry, and presume on their own strength; for presumption is a dangerous night, which casts a mind blinded by self-love into great precipices. In fine, those labour in the night, who withdraw from obedience, and are guided by their own judgment and will; for obedience is the pillar of the desert, that enlightens and points out to us the way to heaven. Whoever follows not this heavenly light, walks in darkness, and is in danger of never entering the promised land. If you would labour usefully for your own and your neighbour's salvation, avoid these defects, by cultivating purity of conscience, purity of heart, the practice of obedience, and diffidence in yourself, by which you will continually recur to Jesus Christ, *without whom you can do nothing.*

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus therefore said to them: Children, have you any meat?" (*John*, xxi. 5.)

This tender Father is touched with compassion, in beholding them after their fruitless labour, fatigued, hungry, and destitute of nourishment. Therefore he asks, "have you any meat?" "They answered him, no." He was not ignorant of their necessity, but he would have them acknowledge it, in order to dispose them for the favour he was about to impart. Imagine that he also addresses you thus: my child, have you humility, patience, devotion, obedience? This is the fruit which should be gathered from your labour, this is the nourishment of your soul. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you." (*John*, vi. 27.) Reply then, with simplicity and sincerity of heart, that you are destitute of all these, that you expect them from his infinite goodness. Say to him, Lord, thou art the "Father of mercies, and God of all consolation." I am thy poor necessitous child, whom creatures can neither satiate nor relieve. From thee alone I hope for nourishment or repose. But remember, that he gives only to those who labour. It appertains to God alone, says St. Bernard, to sit on his throne, because he alone is immutable. The seraphim stand in his presence. Of all that surround him, not one remains inactive. The spirit of pride was lost, because he said in his heart: "I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High," (*Isaiah*, xiv. 14,) thinking to find his beatitude in himself, without the obligation of labouring. O strange blindness! to expect happiness through the medium of sloth, forgetfulness of God and ourselves.

3rd Point. Consider—"Jesus saith to his disciples: Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find." (*John*, xxi. 8.) He then blesses their obedience with a miraculous success. Do you also cast your net on the right side, and not on the left; that is to say, on the side of grace, not of nature. In all your actions,

let grace prevent the movements of nature, and regulate the tenor of your life. Cast on the side of heaven, not of earth Let not temporal interests prevail over the spiritual. Govern yourself by the maxims of eternity. Live as a "heavenly man," using things terrestrial purely from necessity. Cast on the side of the cross, not of sensual delights, nor even of spiritual consolations. The cross is the portion of the elect, whom the Saviour of the world shall seat at his right hand to judge the reprobate. In fine, on the side of God, not of the creature. Rectify your intentions; seek the sovereign good, your own and your neighbour's spiritual advancement; seek the glory of Jesus Christ—in him you will find the plenitude of all good. Ah! how many opportunities of amassing merits we lose through our own fault! We are not required to do greater or more difficult things than those we actually perform; it suffices that they be animated by obedience, charity, or some other motive of virtue. This would render them comparatively easy and sweet; nevertheless, through want of care and application, we lose so considerable an advantage. Children of men, how long will you be heavy of heart? Why love you vanity, and seek after lies?

TUESDAY.

On Jesus discovering himself to his Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus stood on the shore yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." (*John*, xxi. 4.) Hence we learn, that a special light and grace are necessary for recognizing the presence of our Lord; and this he gives not to all, because he finds not in all the purity of heart and application of mind neces-

sary for profiting of so precious a gift. How few there are who apply to this divine science, and who study to know him in his several states of suffering and glory, and in the whole economy of his love, so that they can say, in all times and places: "It is the Lord." (*John*, xxi. 7.) He permits this malady, this humiliation, this unexpected and vexatious accident. He speaks by the lips of this preacher or superior. He ordains this: I regard not secondary causes in these events, "nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man;" (*John*, i. 13,) but the good pleasure of God, as those who are born of his Divine Spirit, and who say in all occurrences: Suffice it to know this comes from God; I respect and love all his dispensations, and every manifestation of his counsels, his mysteries, his annihilations, and his greatness; whether he appear as an infant in the crib, a sinner in the circumcision, a fugitive in Egypt, an artizan in the shop of Nazareth, a solitary in the desert, a fool in the court of Herod, an impostor in the pretorium of Pilate, a slave at the pillar, a public victim on the cross, or as dead in the sepulchre. I esteem him not less under those abasements, than when he appeared as a victorious and triumphant king on the day of his entering Jerusalem, or when expelling devils, raising the dead, triumphing over death in his own person, and ascending from the tomb even to the highest heavens; for he is equally, under all circumstances, my Lord and my God!

2nd Point. Consider—"That disciple, therefore, whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: It is the Lord." (*John*, xxi. 7.) Jesus discovers himself to the disciple whom he loved, and through him to the others. The cause of this privilege is, the love of the Master and the purity of the disciple. When he saw the miraculous draught of fishes, he immediately understood that Jesus Christ was present, and unhesitatingly pronounced: "It is the Lord." The first who recognised Jesus is the

disciple whom he loved, because the eye of love is clear-sighted. Do you desire to know Christ? Endeavour to deserve his love. Do you desire that he love you? Love purity; join purity with charity: these two virtues are the eyes of the soul, which are open to all the secrets of God. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." (*Matt.* v. 6.) According to St. Leo, the eye that is not purified is incapable of beholding the splendour of true light. That which to pure souls is an object of admiration, is a cause of pain to those who are sullied with vice. Fly, therefore, the gloomy shadow of earthly vanities, and purify the eyes of the soul from the midst of vice, to the end that the spirit enjoying perfect serenity, may rejoice in the splendour of that interior vision with the brightness whereof the sinner is dazzled. "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels. Cast me not away from thy face, and take not thy holy spirit om me." (*Ps.* l. 12, 13.)

3rd Point. Consider—"That disciple, therefore, whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: It is the Lord." St. John, illuminated by a special grace, discovers his divine Master by the interior impressions of love and joy sensibly excited within his heart. He was the favourite of the Incarnate wisdom, from whose divine breast he had drawn the spirit of understanding, and who now recognizes his Lord in the splendour of his new and glorified life, after having beheld, followed, and loved him amidst all the opprobrium and horrors of his ignominious death on Calvary. Thus the Divine Spouse is accustomed to manifest himself to pure and innocent souls. The idea with which they are impressed of the infinite holiness of his divinity, and the sweet attractions of his sacred humanity, inspires them with an utter contempt for all created objects; so that, far from being dazzled by any human splendour, or mistaking the creature for the Creator, they discover,

even at the first glance, that it is not the Lord, it is not their God, it is not their benign Jesus, whose image is enshrined in their hearts. Such are the sweetness and strength of his interior voice, that the souls who are favoured with his familiar conversation, have an experimental knowledge of the moment of his approach. Even when he conceals from them the light of his countenance, and when the soft whisper of his voice is unheard, they are sensible of his presence by the aid of that beneficent hand which sustains them in the performance of acts superior to the power of nature. In fine, they cannot be ignorant that all these favours are the effect of his liberality; nor can they cease to bless his name, and repeat unceasingly, "It is the Lord." From you, my God, proceed this light, this peace, this strength and benediction. "Thou openest thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature. The Lord is just in all his ways, and holy in all his works. The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will do the will of them that fear him, and he will hear their prayer, and save them." (*Ps.* cxliv.)

WEDNESDAY.

On St. Peter casting himself into the Sea to meet his Master.

1st Point. Consider—"Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea." (*John*, xxi. 7.) This is the first duty of a fervent disciple of Jesus Christ, who desires to employ himself in good works, and labour profitably for the salvation of souls. He must clothe himself with humility, patience, meekness, constancy, obedience, in fine all the virtues which con-

stitute the livery of the Son of God, in order to follow his divine Master, and succeed in his undertakings. "Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ." (*Rom.* xiii. 14.) Meditate on these words; in them are contained several motives for clothing yourself with his virtues and assuming his spirit. He is your Master. He is your sovereign and legitimate Lord, therefore you should wear his livery. He is Jesus, that is, Saviour. Having taken upon him human nature with all its miseries, for your redemption, is it not just, that in order to attain salvation you should be clothed with his sanctity, and partake in his sufferings? He is the Christ, that is to say, the anointed of the Lord, of whom the prophet says—"Myrrh, and stacte, and cassia, perfume thy garments from the ivory houses." (*Ps.* xliv. 9.) The sweetness of charity and the bitterness of mortification are the perfumes of the spouse, which will render you in the words of St. Paul, "The good odour of Jesus Christ."

2nd Point. Consider—St. Peter "cast himself into the sea," in order more speedily to reach his divine Master. Such should be the fervour of a disciple of Christ: he should spare no labour, fear no danger, when there is question of the service of God. The fervent expose themselves to every suffering for the love of Jesus Christ. The cold and tepid fear to be drowned in the waters. The fervent undertake difficult and heroic works, though not of precept, whilst the tepid fail in the resolution of discharging the easiest and most obligatory duties. Be animated by a holy fervour, and you will be sufficiently strong to vanquish your enemies, and surmount every obstacle to your perfection. Imitate the example of St. Peter, and you will soon arrive at union with God. You will pass through, and, if necessary, walk on the waters; the ardour of your love will overcome every obstacle, and render you in a manner omnipotent. Fly, therefore.

tepidity and coldness in the service of God, and imprint deeply in your heart these words of venerable Bede: "A continual effort of fervour is necessary to surmount the torrent of the world, which hurries away the soul in its rapid course, and casts it into an abyss of woe."

3rd POINT. Consider—"The other disciples came in the ship (for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes." (*John*, xxi. 8.) This marks two descriptions of persons who tend to perfection. The first are fervent and courageous, and as they are inspired by an ardent zeal, they cannot remain enclosed in the vessel; but cast themselves into the sea of sufferings, in order to attain a more speedy union with Jesus crucified, in whom their souls live, rather than in the bodies they animate. The second are meek and peaceful; submissive to the will of God, they remain patiently in the vessel of divine Providence, enjoying the favours of their Master when he is present, and when he absents himself awaiting his approach in peace and in silence; saying with St. Francis de Sales: "If he visits me, I will receive him with joy; if he comes not, I will not eagerly seek him; I will expect his preventing call, whether he approach unto me, or draw me to himself." If it is necessary to pass through privations and sufferings, they do not, like St. Peter, cast themselves into the sea, but commit their life, honour, and fortune to the protecting care of our Lord, to be governed according to his good pleasure.

O my divine Lord! I am entirely thine; if thou art pleased to cast me into the sea of humiliation and sorrow, impart to me that fortifying grace which may animate and sustain me in a manner worthy of thy faithful follower. My love for thee is yet so weak, that I shrink with terror from suffering and the cross. Ah! when shall thy divine charity so animate my heart that like St. Peter, I shall courageously plunge

into the sea, that is, ardently seek and joyfully embrace voluntary humiliation and suffering, thus to offer a thanksgiving for thy gratuitous and devoted love?

THURSDAY.

Jesus invites his Apostles to dine.

1st Point. Consider—"As soon as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread." (*John*, xxi. 9.) This is a type of the spiritual refection which our Lord prepares for those who fervently labour in his service, presenting them with the bread of angels, in the strength whereof they proceed in their course with renewed vigour. While zeal for his glory occupies us here below in the exercise of good works, he prepares in his heavenly kingdom a banquet worthy of his royal munificence; and at the dawning of the day of eternity he will invite us to his table, where we shall taste the ineffable enjoyments he has prepared for us. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." (*John*, xiv. 15.) Our Lord not only invites his disciples to eat, he serves them himself in person. "And Jesus cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish in like manner." (*John*, xxi. 13.) How deliciously is the soul regaled that is nourished with the Eucharistic bread on earth—a foretaste of the delights with which it shall be satiated in the heavenly kingdom!

"Lord, give us always this bread." (*John*, vi. 34.) O good Jesus, hear me; call me at the hour of my death. Command me to go to thee, to the end I may praise thee with thy saints for ever.

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus saith to them, Come and dine." (*John*, xxi. 12.) The disciples, says St. Gregory, were seven, signifying the gifts of the Holy

Ghost, without which no one can worthily approach the celestial banquet. The presence of this divine Master, the tender familiarity with which he treats them, fill the disciples with joy. Nevertheless, "none of them who were at meat durst ask him: who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." (*John*, xxi. 12.) In silence they adore, admire, and enjoy the sweetness of his countenance and conversation. Thus the faithful soul receives the caresses of Jesus Christ. His tender love humbles, and holds them in profound respect in his presence. Far from presuming on his condescension, the favours they receive serve only to confound and annihilate them. They dare not interrogate, nor sound his actions and conduct, "knowing that it is the Lord," whose person and actions demand veneration and love, not vain and curious research. The nearer they approach to God, the more profound their respect; and if sometimes they inquire, "who art thou?" it is not from a presumptuous desire of penetrating his greatness, but from an ardent will to know, love, and praise him—to humble themselves, in the consideration of his excellence and their own nothingness.

"O Lord, my God, thou art all my good; and who am I that should dare to speak to thee? O Lord, teach me to converse worthily and humbly in thy sight; for thou art my wisdom, who knowest me in truth." (*Imitat.* b. iii., c. 13.)

3rd Point. Consider—"Jesus saith to them: bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land." (*John*, xx. 10, 11.) Our Lord demands a correspondence with his love, and perfect charity is ready to undertake and suffer all things, in order to obey God, and co-operate with the graces received. The true disciples of Jesus Christ, like St. Peter, draw all to him, and refer to his glory alone the fruit of their labours, having no other view or intention than to honour him on earth by their

works, and thereby merit to glorify him eternally in heaven. Is such your love for your divine Saviour? Is your love so strong as to sustain the weight of every labour, and sink under no fatigue? Were our Lord to say to you, as to the disciples: "Bring hither of the fishes you have caught," what good works have you performed? what mortifications have you practised? what victories gained over self? how many souls converted? what reply could you make? What will be your confusion on that day when he will put this interrogatory, if you shall have rendered fruitless the graces imparted both for your own sanctification and the benefit of others?

My soul, thou art troubled and disquieted in the research of created goods, hoping to find therein thy satisfaction and repose. Thou deceivest thyself, for what thou seekest can be found in God alone. Empty thy heart of creatures, and God will fill it with the plenitude of his divinity.

FRIDAY.

Jesus demands thrice of St. Peter, whether he loved him.

1st POINT. Consider—"Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" (*John*, xxi. 15.) Our Lord puts this question, to instruct those who are called to govern others, or labour for the salvation of souls; because they should excel in all virtues, but especially in charity, which is the bond of perfection. On this virtue depends all that is necessary for the due performance of their functions. Is patience requisite to sustain their charge?—"Charity beareth all things." Does the weakness of others demand meekness and compassion?—"Charity is patient, is kind." Charity, as St. Bernard says, is the most

precious ornament of those placed in superiority, for "charity is not puffed up." If disinterestedness is the trait which distinguishes between the mercenary and him that labours purely for God—"charity seeketh not her own." (1 *Cor.* xiii.) Ponder the meaning of these words—"Feed my sheep," (*John*, xxi. 17); that is to say, seek my glory, and not your own interest. How few comply with this injunction! All seek their own, rather than the interest of Jesus Christ. Admire the goodness of the Son of God, who not only loves, but inspires with the same love those by whom you are governed. Give him thanks for the charitable care he dispenses through your superiors. Love them reciprocally; pray for them; respect and esteem them; "for they watch as being to render an account of your souls, that they may do this with joy, and not with grief." (*Heb.* xiii. 17.)

2nd Point. Consider—Why does the Son of God interrogate his Apostle: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" It is to demonstrate how exalted should be the charity of those called to labour for the salvation of souls. Does your conscience render testimony that you love Jesus Christ perfectly—that is to say, more than fortune, friends, honour, even yourself? Otherwise you are not worthy of being entrusted with the care of souls redeemed with his precious blood. According to St Gregory, the Son of God demands of St. Peter if he love him—the first time, to lead him to active and difficult works; the second, to elevate him to heavenly contemplation; the third, to excite him to the fervour of perfect charity towards his neighbour, and to a more ardent love of the increated beauty. In fine, St. Peter repairs, by his triple protestation of his love, the three-fold denial of his divine Master; and the tongue which fear had made an instrument of sin, is now the organ of that charity and zeal which shall afterwards extend the dominion of Jesus Christ, even

to the extremities of the earth. The clemency of our Lord here restores to the penitence of his disciple all that he had lost by sin. He reproaches him not, because divine mercy willingly forgets our offences, provided we are truly contrite. Let not your many faults discourage you; you may efface them by tears, and even surpass those who have lived in innocence, if henceforth you will more ardently love Jesus Christ, and repair the past by the fervour of a contrite heart.

3rd Point. Consider—"And this he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God." (*John* xxi. 19.) Having established St. Peter head of the Church, our Lord promises him neither the riches, the delights, nor the honours of the world. These are unworthy the desires of a Christian, much more of a pastor of souls. He, on the contrary, predicts to him persecutions, martyrdom, and the death of the cross. "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not." (*John*, xxi. 18.) Are, then, the followers of a crucified God unwilling to suffer in his cause? By the inspiring efficacy of grace, they receive the cross with joy, though nature feels a strong repugnance to it. According to St. Augustine, "No one loves that which causes him to suffer, although he love to bear the suffering inflicted." Such should be the resolution of a true disciple of Jesus Christ; such should be his generous and constant love. He should willingly endure pain and labour, renounce fortune, and life itself, for the glory of his Master, and the salvation of souls purchased with his blood.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus reproving the curiosity of St. Peter.

1st Point. Consider—"So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me." (*John*, xxi. 22.) Here you are instructed to watch over yourself, without inquiring curiously into what regards your neighbour. The human mind, says St. Augustine, is ordinarily as curious in examining the lives of others, as it is negligent in correcting itself. "He that feareth God will turn to his own heart." (*Eccles.* xxi. 7.) "The interior man prefers the care of his own soul to all others whatsoever; and he who watches vigilantly over himself, easily abstains from speaking of others. You will never be truly interior and devout, if you do not observe a strict silence in all that does not regard you, and if you fix not your attention on yourself alone. If you occupy yourself with God and the care of your own soul, you will be little touched with any exterior object. Where are you when you are not present to yourself? And what avails labour of soul and body, if in the mean time you neglect to guard yourself? If you desire peace of heart and true union with God, you should despise all things else, that you may give yourself entirely to the care of your own soul." (*Imitat.*) The heart that truly loves God despises all things else; for God himself, whose eternity and immensity fill all things, is its true and only joy.

2nd Point. Consider—"So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me." That is to say, according to St. Cyrill, do not desire to penetrate the secrets of my providence; leave to me the disposition of all things, whether regarding yourself or others. My son, I am the Sovereign Truth; I teach

you that which is just and pleasing to me. There are some who walk not sincerely before me, and being led by a spirit of curiosity and pride, would penetrate my secrets, and comprehend the sublimity of my mysteries, and nevertheless they are neglectful of their own salvation. These persons often fall into great temptations and sins; because I resist these presumptuous souls, I declare myself their enemy. As for you, my son, fear the judgments of God; tremble with fear at the wrath of the Omnipotent. Let not thy heart exalt itself to penetrate the works of the Most High, but rather humble thyself to sound the depth of thy sins, to examine the number of thy offences, and how oftentimes thou hast abused my grace.

3rd Point. Consider—"So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me." Here again you are instructed to moderate your solicitude and desires, however just or charitable they seem; to meet with a spirit of humility and resignation every occurrence contrary to your inclination; and willingly to receive admonition or correction. Attend to your own soul, and look not back to examine the conduct of others. Charity requires that you rejoice in the good they operate, and make allowance for the frailty of nature, but warns you neither to be troubled nor scandalized at the disorders which may happen. Consider not the evil which others commit, but the good that you should perform. Attend to the law of God, and not to those by whom it is violated. You shall not be judged by their opinions, but according to that truth which should be the rule of your life.

Lord, grant me grace that my will may firmly adhere, and tend to the accomplishment of thine in all things. Dispose of me and all creatures according to thy good pleasure. Those who love thy law shall enjoy great peace. "In thy tabernacle they shall dwell for ever; they shall be protected under covert of thy wings." (*Ps.* lx. 5.)

FIFTH SUNDAY.

On the necessity of Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"And he spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint." (*Luke*, xviii. 1.) There are three sorts of prayer in which the whole life of a Christian should pass. The first comprehends mental and vocal prayer; for thought is an interior word, of which the exterior is but the exposition, discovering the sentiments and desires of the heart. The second includes every species of good works which are as a tribute of honour rendered to God, and a supplication presented to his divine clemency. Thus it is said that the blood of Abel cried for vengeance, and that of Jesus Christ for mercy. Every good work combines three qualities. It is meritorious, being performed in the state of grace; satisfactory, through Jesus Christ, for the temporal punishment of sin, because painful to nature; impetratory, for it supplicates silently through the affection with which it is offered. Inasmuch as it is meritorious, it is incommunicable, but inasmuch as it is satisfactory and impetratory, it can be applied to those for whom it is offered. The third kind of prayer is exercised by the affection of the soul for this holy exercise, a habit of recollection, and a secret inclination to apply itself to God when works of necessity or charity leave it free. It is therefore evident that a Christian is always under an obligation, and always capable of prayer—if not actually, by word of heart or mouth, at least virtually, by disposition and the bias of inclination. As he is obliged to hold himself in a disposition of charity, benevolence, and meekness towards his neighbour—of abasement, confusion, and humiliation towards himself—so is he also obliged to hold himself in a disposition of reverence, love, and

supplication towards God; so that a word, a thought, may suffice to draw him back to prayer, as to his centre.

2nd POINT. Consider—there are times in which prayer is especially necessary—as, the morning and evening. Thus, in the ancient law, they daily offered in sacrifice a lamb, and burned incense on the altar of perfumes morning and evening. Daniel and David added the prayer of noon: "Evening and morning, and at noon, I will speak and declare: and he shall hear my voice" (*Ps* liv. 18.) "He knelt down three times a day, and adored and gave thanks before his God." (*Dan.* vi. 10.) We should have recourse to prayer in all those important occasions wherein we need a more special aid from God Thus David, before engaging with his enemies, addressed himself to the Lord for direction in this enterprise. Esther and Judith received in prayer an extraordinary succour, by which they delivered their nation from the danger with which it was menaced. Our Lord himself passed the night in prayer before selecting his Apostles; not that he needed aid, but he did so for our instruction. Again, prayer is necessary when danger, persecution, or temptation threaten. Then we should say, as did King Josaphat, in the extremity of his danger—"O Lord God of our fathers, thou art God in heaven, and rulest over all the kingdoms and nations; in thy hand is strength and power, and no one can resist thee; but as we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee." (2 *Paral.* xx.) Let prayer be the commencement of every action, remembering that without Jesus Christ you can do nothing. Many wise have been deceived, and many holy ones have endangered their salvation, by neglecting to recur to God by prayer. "I have seen with sorrow," says St. Cyprian, "men strong and generous, who were near receiving the crown for which they had suffered long, yet who, in the end, unhappily denied him whom they had confessed with constancy.

They are thus grievously fallen, because they neglected to invoke him who gives strength to the weak."

3rd Point. Consider—our Lord being now to depart from this world, and return to his Father, has established prayer as the bond of union between heaven and earth. Moreover, as we shall have no part in the Holy Spirit which Jesus Christ has promised to send down upon his Church, unless we live united with him by grace, can we hope to obtain this if we neglect the means he has appointed, when he says: "Ask and you shall receive?" To whom has he promised the Divine Spirit but to those who ask? Withdraw therefore at this holy time, from the tumult of the world, and all unnecessary or distracting occupation, that you may give yourself to prayer with all possible recollection. Follow your Redeemer in spirit, look upon this earth as a place of exile and captivity, and let your heart be "hidden in God with Jesus Christ." Enter into the sentiments of the Apostles when separated from our Lord; they hide themselves from the world in which they take no part, and persevere together in prayer, awaiting the promised Comforter. How holy their dispositions! How assiduously they prepare for his reception! How estranged in heart from all created objects! How ardent their prayers and desires to be replenished with the Spirit of God!

MONDAY.

On Jesus appearing to his Disciples on the mountain of Galilee.

1st Point. Consider—"And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And seeing him they adored: but some doubted. And Jesus coming, spoke to them,

saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." (*Matt.* xxviii. 16.) This power, inherent in his divine person, he has merited for his sacred humanity by his sufferings and death. "He became obedient even unto the death of the cross." Therefore, says the angelical doctor, he has received power not only to resuscitate himself, but to call forth all the dead from the tomb. He humbled himself to descend into hell. Therefore, he has received power to ascend into the highest heavens, drawing after him his elect, to reign with him for eternity. He subjected himself to the power and the judgment of man, who condemned him unjustly. Therefore, he has received power to judge the living and the dead. In fine, he annihilated himself, so as to be crushed like a worm of the earth, and treated as the last of men, the opprobrium of nature, and a mark for universal contempt and scorn. Therefore, he is seated on a throne of glory, to be adored by the angels of heaven, and all the kings of the earth. In the example of this divine model, you learn that the cross is the path to glory: humility, patience, meekness, and obedience, are the titles by which you are to reign with Jesus Christ, and triumph over the enemies of your salvation. Our Lord could have vanquished the powers of the earth by other means than the cross. But he would purchase at the price of his precious blood, the honour of victory, to teach you by his example, that if you would overcome the demon, you must place all your strength and consolation in the cross.

2nd Point. Consider—the power of Jesus Christ is terrible to the sinner, who cannot resist him because he is infinite; nor fly from him, because his immensity fills all space. Therefore, as we are all sinners, we have all cause to fear, and to say with Jeremiah—"There is none like to thee, O Lord: thou art great, and great is thy name in might. Who shall not fear thee, O king of nations? for thine is the glory: among

all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. They shall be all proved together to be senseless and foolish: the doctrine of their vanity is wood. But the Lord is the true God: he is the living God, and the everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his threatening." (*Jer.* x.) When we remember what man is, shall we be astonished that he is seized with fear at the thought of the divine judgments, since his own conscience is an unanswerable witness of his guilt? I am terror-struck, says St. Bernard, lest I fall into a living death and a dying life.

3rd Point. Consider—The power of Jesus Christ is not less amiable than dreadful, and this attribute he especially employs in the exercise of mercy. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations." (*Matt.* xxviii.) He says not: Go, avenge my death, destroy those who have crucified me; such is the language of sinners. But the Son of God, on the contrary, says: Go, labour for the salvation of mankind, teach them the path that leads to heaven, withdraw them from the slavery of the demon, wash away their sins in my blood, impart to them the graces I have merited, and of which I constitute you the dispensers. You shall suffer much in this function of charity; but let neither torments nor death abate the zeal with which you labour for those souls for whom I have laid down my life. I have suffered, I have vanquished, and behold I live. By the cross have I entered into my glory. "Why then dost thou fear to take up the cross, which opens to thee the road to heaven?" There is no salvation for the soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross. Take up thy cross, follow Jesus, and thou wilt arrive at eternal life.

Thou knowest, O my Jesus, that my weak nature shrinks from the cross, although I am persuaded that it is only by the way of Calvary that I can enter Para-

dise. Inspire me, I beseech thee, with the patience, strength, and courage of thy martyrs; and since I can give thee no greater proof of gratitude and love than by bearing the cross after thee, vouchsafe that I may embrace it generously, sustained by the desire of pleasing thee, and the hope of an eternal happiness.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus appointing his Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations.

1st. POINT. Consider—"Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (*Matt.* xxviii. 19, 20.) Jesus Christ now going to ascend into heaven would draw us after him by the virtue of faith. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned." (*Mark.* xvi. 16.) This is a powerful motive for receiving and reducing to practice all the truths of faith. "Wherefore, casting away all uncleanness, and abundance of naughtiness, with meekness receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (*James*, i. 21.) Is there question of enduring contempt, of suppressing a desire of revenge, stifling an evil thought; say within yourself, the gospel so teaches, it must be done, my salvation depends thereon. "He that believeth, shall be saved." "He that believeth not, shall be condemned," Our Lord says: "Going, therefore, teach all nations." Cold and void of the fear of God must be the heart of him who would not willingly spend himself, and be spent, to contribute to the salvation of souls redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ. Is not the salvation of souls the masterpiece of the

mercy of Jesus Christ? O blessed vocation, to bear this adorable name throughout the world, and cause every knee to bow before it, and every tongue to confess it!

2nd Point. Consider—that baptism is the gate by which men enter into the Church, which is the kingdom of Jesus Christ. He would have this conferred in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in order to distinguish Christians from Jews and infidels, to teach them that their souls are consecrated to the most Holy Trinity; consequently, that they should not profane that which belongs to the Father who has created, to the Son who has redeemed, to the Holy Ghost who has sanctified it. As they live spiritually by grace and the mercy of the three divine persons, so they can do nothing without their assistance; therefore, whatever they perform should be directed to the honour and glory of the most Holy Trinity. Hence, the primitive Christians were accustomed to commence every action by the sign of the cross, saying: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; that is, according to the explanation of St. Jerome, to the glory of the three adorable persons. In fine, their whole conduct should be holy, their life worthy the presence, the approbation, and love of the sacred Trinity. Giving thanks for the grace of baptism, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, they say with the royal prophet: "Open unto me the gates of justice: I will go into them, and give praise to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord, the just shall enter. I will give glory to thee, because thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." (*Ps.* cxvii.)

3rd Point. Consider—that to have received the faith in baptism, suffices not for salvation; we must add thereto the observance of God's commandments. An unshaken faith in the indivisible Trinity is the founda-

tion of the edifice of salvation; but we must build thereon. For, according to St. Paul, "not those who hear the law are just before God; but those who accomplish the law, they shall be justified" "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?" "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, offering up Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou that faith did co-operate with his works: and by works faith was made perfect." (*James*, ii.) The commandments of God must be observed with devotion; therefore David saith: "I have hated and abhorred iniquity, but I have loved thy law, and I lifted up my hands to thy commandments, which I have loved; and I was exercised in thy justification. O how have I loved thy law, O Lord! it is my meditation all the day." (*Ps.* cxviii.) Consider who he is that speaks, and declares to you his will. It is your God, your Redeemer, your Judge, who will render to every one according to his works.

Say to him, my soul, with the royal prophet: "Give bountifully to thy servant, enliven me: and I shall keep thy words: open thou my eyes and I will consider the wondrous things of thy law. I am a sojourner on the earth: hide not thy commandments from me, my soul hath coveted too long for thy justifications, at all times." (*Ps.* cxviii.)

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus promising to his Apostles to be with them to the end of time.

1st. Point. Consider—"Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (*Matt.* xxviii. 20.) The presence of Jesus Christ constitutes

the happiness and strength of his servants. Let not your weakness make you fearful; confide in me, says Jesus Christ: I am thy strength. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." (*Matt.* xxviii. 18) In the presence of Jesus Christ nothing can be wanting to his servants, for he is the source of all good. They can receive no injury, for "in all things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us." (*Rom.* viii. 37.) Jesus Christ is always near to those who fear him. Under his protection neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil can harm them. Their only apprehension should be, to lose his divine presence; and this can never occur unless through their own fault. In the presence of Jesus Christ nothing can resist his servants; for the apostle says: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me." In effect, faithful souls draw profit from that which the world esteems evil, as poverty, contempt, temptations, maladies, persecutions. How is this effected? By faith in Jesus Christ.—To him who believeth all things are possible. By confidence.—Those who trust in the Lord, shall be clothed with his strength. By charity.—Love and do all that you will. By prayer in the name of Jesus Christ.—If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you. In virtue of that name they bear away the heavenly crown with a holy and irresistible violence.

2nd Point. Consider—how important to remain united to Jesus Christ, since his presence is so advantageous and necessary. Repass in mind the apparitions you have meditated since his resurrection, and thence draw efficacious means of obliging him to dwell with you during your mortal life. He will be always with you, if you weep his absence, as did blessed Magdalen; if you efface your sins by the tears of sincere repentance, as St. Peter; if you communicate the knowledge of God to your neighbour, as the devout women made known the resurrection of our Lord to the apostles; if you

exercise charity towards the poor, and communicate with devotion and reverence, as the disciples of Emmaus; if you assist with fervour at public prayer and sacrifice, and preserve fraternal charity, as the apostles, who were united together when our Lord appeared; if you love labour, and refer all your actions purely to the glory of God, as the disciples who cast their nets at the command of our Lord; if you love Jesus Christ, and ardently long to behold him in his glory, as the disciples who assembled on the mountain of Galilee: in fine, if you live in obedience, and the observance of your rules, persevering therein unto death, as the apostles who assembled at Bethania, which signifies the house of obedience, awaiting the day when our Lord should ascend into heaven, according as he had ordained.

3rd Point. Consider—the words of consolation with which our Lord terminates his glorified life on earth: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." We are therefore assured that he is always with us, but our inconstancy makes us frequently unmindful of our resolutions to hold ourselves in his divine presence. How important then to arrest the sallies of our mind, and strengthen our constancy in his service and love. Our only care should be to cultivate an intimate union with Jesus, victorious over death, and make his conversation with the apostles the model of ours. After the resurrection of our Lord, he conversed only with his chosen friends. He visited them rarely; his ordinary conversation being with the angels and saints whom he had brought forth from Limbo. In these apparitions he spoke only of the kingdom of God. If he eat with his apostles, it was only to confirm their faith in his resurrection. In fine, after his resurrection he appeared under another form, which prevented his disciples from knowing him. Such, in few words, was his glorified life on earth, and such should your life be, if you would attain perfection.

You should seek the society of the virtuous, give yourself to prayer, love pious conversation, mortify your senses, and let your whole conduct be so changed, that you may say with St. Paul: "I live now, not I, but Jesus Christ liveth in me." (*Gal.* ii.) Say in the sincerity of your heart: "Lord, I have thought on my ways: and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. Direct my steps according to thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me." (*Ps.* cxviii.)

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